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WORSHIPPERS

A NOVEL

BY

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PART I

WORSHIPPERS

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CHAPTER I

"THE crowd will tire him, and he will take himself off. He must really believe that things are quiet here."

"Well, it all depends what he is coming for. He isn't likely to use us for copy: there is little poetry in us. You think you will find him changed?"

"He must have changed. He writes with more confidence; almost with authority. He was just the sort of man a few years would do a lot with."

And the last speaker fell to musing, until his slackened pace brought a protest from his companion.

The two men were on the southern edge of Philadelphia's Jewish quarter, over which darkness crept as the blotched, red globe disappeared over the horizon, leaving the western sky a smoky orange which faded into a dismal yellow overhead, and grew greyish blue in the far east.

Clanging cars were hurrying belated toilers home. On many street corners workingmen talked in high pitched voices before parting, changing a weary weight from one leg to another; a few groups of girls shuffled along with sudden outbursts of laughter; hunger-hurried wagons followed in the wake of the cars; and children almost

scurried under the horses in their play, a few braving the fall chill with bare feet.

The city was noticeably settling into quiet, the day's roar dulled to a hum.

A begrimed workingman, shrunken in stature, with Jewish cast of features, passed the two men, and jerked the hat from his head in greeting to one of them.

"A patient?"

"Yes. He has about six months more. Hear his cough? The average tailor-shop is excellent for the culture of the bacillus."

The other evinced no interest.

"I don't say," slowly continued the physician, "that they aren't fortunate to stop working that early. The trouble is that, without exception, they breed a housefull of children. Then there's the charity organization to be gone after, the man to be buried, the children to be set to work, and the widow to be provided for,—which means some easy, non-paying job—"

"Getting blue?" queried his companion to cut the details short.

"Oh, no!" came irritably. And silence reigned between them as the physician—tall, stout, with a great head Jewish in profile, beak-like nose, and cold grey eyes, a man of thirty-eight,—returned to his abstraction.

His companion, a well-proportioned, slim, dark-skinned, handsome man, finally asked in a colorless voice without the foreign accent that marked the physician's intonation:

"He wrote that he cared to meet people?"

"Why should he hide himself? Admiration won't interfere with his work."

"Your admiration?"

"I shall not be afraid to tell him what I think of his stuff," said the physician.

"Mrs. Bronski will want him at the house."

"He didn't shut himself up in New York."

"Yet you were in New York several times within the last years without seeing him."

The physician vouchsafed no reply.

"Perhaps yours is the misfortune," continued his companion, "of knowing him so well that you wonder others should care to."

This time there was a slight shrug of the broad shoulders.

"You will confess that we haven't a writer in Yiddish who is his equal," persisted the younger man as if determined to bring to the surface the jealousy he discerned.

"We haven't too many good writers in Yiddish," came the answer. Then the physician cried petulantly, "Can you compare his work with that done on the other side in other tongues?"

"Yes,—from what I have seen of it. He is unfortunate in working with a language that cramps because of narrowness of vocabulary, and makes hideous with uncouthness of sound."

"Nonsense! A thought that is universal is so in any language." As they reached the corner of a small, intersecting street, the physician paused, and said, "I've got a typhoid fever case near here. On the way back I'll come in for a glass of tea."

"A patient with money?"

"Oh, I'll get my money sometime. Only, the girl that's sick makes the living for the family. The other children, who are older, have remained in Russia, strange to say. You can't let people die, especially when they come pulling the bell."

Left alone, the younger man went down the silent side-street where small brick houses of monotonous uni-

formity stretched out on both hands. At one point there was a break; a house with high steps flanked by a railing, stood out conspicuously amongst its neighbors.

The man lightly ascended these steps, and rang the bell. A ruddy faced girl of the Polish servant type admitted him. He hung up his hat familiarly on the rack, and swung open the door facing it, revealing the sitting room, a small apartment neatly ordered, with books and magazines in numerous places, and the photographs of one woman variously posed adorning the wall with eye-catching effect.

An instant later one of a pair of folding doors at the end of the room was thrown open, and the original of the photographs, tall, slender, lithe in movement, entered.

"The top of the evening to you, Mr. Robinson!" came ringingly. "Just in time to save me from a dull evening that was lying in wait for just such a dismal day."

"Afraid of your own thoughts?" he laughed. "I can only add to the dullness. How is Mr. Bronski?"

"Oh," —the voice became spiritless—"better. He begins to forget to take his medicines. You want some tea, of course;"—rising from the seat into which she had flung herself.

"Let's wait for Hindman. He left me on the corner on his way to a patient; but promised to be here."

"Yes?" She sought her seat again. "I wonder if a few more will look me up this evening? From now on I must have many people here. Fortunately, so many have learnt to like the place;"—with a glance about her.

To the visitor the dark hair, soft brown eyes, and finely-shaped nose were pleasingly harmonious in the diffused light of the lamp's globe. He said abruptly:

"They'll come. Chilly weather and long evenings are sure to bring them."

"And where can they find so many people to disagree with them?" she laughed. "It is certainly never dull you will admit."

"If brilliancy is measured by noise," scoffed the visitor. "But there is a possibility that we shall have an exceptional year of it, unless I am mistaken. We are promised a distinguished visitor from New York."

"Quick! Who?"

She leaned forward eagerly, her elbows on the table, her tapering fingers under her chin,—a successful pose in one of the photographs.

"Alexander Raman."

He smiled at the magical effect of the name. Her arms came down quickly, and her head went back with the surprise.

"Raman!—the poet!"

"Yes. He is to stay here for some time. It may be that he wants quiet for work—"

"Yes! Yes! That's it! New York is too gloomy in the fall months," she said softly, with haste, lest he pause.

"So he wrote Hindman, who is all stirred up, as if it was going to prove an ordeal. It must have brought the past back too vividly. You did not meet Raman in New York?"

"No." Her eyes were bent dreamily on the lamp. "They say he is the type of the perfect poet, and has not at all been harmed by his former life in the tailor-shops."

"He's a Socialist," came in complaint.

"Oh, no!" Her gesture spoke her repugnance. "Not that! An Idealist! He'll not be tied down to anything. You can't find labels for such men. I know he has written workingmen's songs; but he is really above it." She went on in Russian: "He may indulge his sympathies;

does that mean he has much in common with the crowd? Dr. Hindman will have to bring him."

"It's the only place in Philadelphia where he can find a semblance of real culture," the visitor said with irony that feared itself.

"My salon!" the woman laughed half-proudly. And the man was impatient with the enlarged mouth that wiped out much of the beauty of the features. "He can get a measure of quiet here without isolating himself," she mused aloud. Then, rising to her feet with a quick, nervous motion, she exclaimed in English,

"How few the real light-bearers! He will help us much,—all of us!" She smiled a little when she said, "I must see whether I have some cookies with which to put the doctor in good humor. Here is a magazine article entitled 'Culture and the Stage' by an actress who believes that she has done much with both. Don't dare to praise it!"

The book was thrown to him, and she slipped out, while he settled himself for a careful perusal of the scorned article which promised a discussion; and he was soon gathering arguments for a defense.

Once he glanced up from the pages to the photographs of the woman who had left the room. He mused: "They haven't been fair to her. She has all these qualities,—every one! And yet what sort of a hearing has she been granted?"

The lady in question returned to be greeted with:

"The article is a mighty good one. She—"

"—Is thinking of herself; and I never discovered the subtilty in her acting over which every so-called critic raves."

"She has a remarkable intellect—"

There was a long wrangle in which she sustained

her part with growing excitement, until sharp tones keyed themselves to a refusal to allow him speech. When he found that he could not talk down the tempest, he subsided. She finished with a show of pity for his reasoning.

A ring of the bell silenced her.

"Hindman," said the visitor when he heard the curt words addressed to the girl who opened the door. "It appears we shall have the quiet of only three disputants this evening."

The doctor seemed to fill the room. After a perfunctory greeting, he inquired in ludicrously softened tones:

"I wonder how soon you could satisfy a tea-thirsty man, Mrs. Bronski?"

"We have only been waiting for the thirst."

Gas jets illuminated the simple dining room where three glasses filled with tea, in which slices of lemon floated, stood ready on spotless linen.

"An inspiration! Dramatic promptness!" smiled the physician as he reached out for the sugar bowl. And to cover his indecorous haste he said petulantly, "The chilly days have returned. They talk of punishment after death when they give us a climate like this!"

"The period of preparation," suggested Robinson.

"Well, the chill is not going to terrify us this year," said the hostess. "At least, such has been the news."

"Oh, you mean *that*." The physician stirred his tea slowly and thoughtfully.

"Yes: Raman!" Mrs .Bronski leaned forward, gazing earnestly at the cold features of the preoccupied man. "I am glad; very glad."

Dr. Hindman's grey eyes almost disappeared under the heavy lids as he smilingly murmured, "You forget the poor glow-worms who will fear the sun."

A scornful sweep of the hand was the answer. The third party watched the scene in silence.

"You must bring him," the lady ordered. And then she asked hesitatingly, "Don't you think I ought to invite some people?—Or are we sufficient unto ourselves?"

"In awe of him already?" said the doctor with accented quietness in Russian. "Do not be afraid; he will not startle you. He is liable to lapse into nonsense like any two-legged animal; and always likes praise, although no doubt, he has learnt to like it best if put with care. Between times he does work which helps us forget his other failings."

"Splendid!" came with a touch of indignation from the hostess.

"But he is a very approachable man, I hear," the other visitor hastened to assure her. "If I were in your place, I would give him a quiet evening. A chat across the table, you know."

"Yes, I wouldn't overdo it," the physician suddenly said. "And now, what else have you found of interest in our world?"

Mrs. Bronski at once mentioned the magazine article which had already served as a battle-ground; and at once the talk swung to quick-stroke criticism of the realistic drama and of one of its masters upon whom the physician held forth exhaustively. The hostess decried the tendency of the school.

"Because what is required is to stand away from the work to get its intention, its philosophy," said Dr. Hindman with deliberateness which bespoke superiority; "and you would have it shout plainly out of all the lines. Must we who live in the midst of so many currents of thought be satisfied with trifling? He does not write for children."

"He is unplayable except to pretentious people, to people who pose intellectually," was the hostess' last stand.

"Well, for goodness' sake, don't glorify the primitive!" exclaimed the doctor.

They speedily made truce over gossip which first flayed unmercifully, and then handsomely condoned.

In the midst of it, the door opened to admit a man who still held the latch key as he greeted them. Hindman, extending his hand, cried, "You are looking well!" turning for support to Mrs. Bronski who inclined her head.

Robinson said familiarly, "Time for last year's overcoat."

"For the overcoat of a year before last," came like a gurgle from between blackened teeth that were few in number. "I suppose you young people complain of the chill. You have no blood. At your years I could sleep out of doors in the middle of winter."

"And now at fifty-five?" came from the woman evenly, the vexation she felt absent from her tone.

"I really believe I am younger than any of you." And the stooped shoulders were thrust back.

"No blood and no hair," smiled Hindman, as he stroked his own almost bald head.

"In that I boast of my youth no longer." And the other touched the few hairs that stood out behind his ears.

The doctor asked:

"You are busy?"

"Busy? No. And I got a new list of prices for drugs to-day. Of course they're higher; and you can't expect that poor people will pay more for medicines. And then there's the new drug-store not two blocks

away." The words came out in jerky fashion, the lower jaw trembling with excitement.

Robinson's attempted pleasantry of: "Why shouldn't they pay dear for being sick?" passed off unnoticed.

"I don't see how they stand it!" Bronski muttered as he found a seat; and with a sigh, gathered his stumpy fingers together before him on the table, and absently stared at his wife.

"I sent you two prescriptions," said Hindman.

"The boy must have filled one. Mine did not look like a long case."

"Just now there is a lull."

"Oh, enough of your shop!" growled Robinson. "Let me tell you some news, Mr. Bronski."

"Something really interesting?" was asked listlessly.

"Perhaps not as interesting as sick people; but bearable. Alexander Raman is coming for quite a stay."

Bronski lifted his head from the glass of milk which the servant girl had brought him, the contents of which he was ready to transfer to his mouth with a spoon.

"So! When?"

"To-morrow."

The head of the house brightened up; and growing cheerfully enthusiastic, held forth:

"That's a man I could read with satisfaction, who had always something to say. And when I occasionally get hold of him now, I find that he doesn't put pen to paper for nothing. Why, in God's name, he doesn't shake himself loose from his old friends, I don't see! They must bother the life out of him with their restlessness and their quarrels. You can realize how disturbed he is, in the articles he writes."

"It's only his old friends that perpetuate Yiddish," said the doctor as he sweetened his third glass of tea.

"But there is an appreciative set above them he can appeal to that doesn't openly show it cares for Yiddish," persisted Bronski.

"Above or below," cried Mrs. Bronski, "it is all the same to him. He does as his soul counsels."

"It's a question. With fools like that weighing him down!" And her husband shrugged his shoulders in disgust.

"Oh, he shakes them off once in a while," said Robinson. "He really writes in two styles. One's his Sabbath style of high art; and the other keeps on the high hat of the Sabbath, and walks in the cracked shoes of our everyday world. Though he is getting to keep on his good clothes most of the time."

Hindman looked his surprise at the flow of wit; Mrs. Bronski speedily complimented it.

"I have been reading a novelist whose dialogue walks on stilts," Robinson explained with a grin. "It makes a fellow feel unusually bright, I want to tell you."

"Unfortunately, for only a short period," Hindman added between sips of his tea.

Robinson, overlooking the personal nature of the remark, ventured:

"I sometimes feel that few in our community know how to make a conversation flow smoothly and interestingly."

Mrs. Bronski shook with laughter.

"*They* engage in smooth conversation!" she cried.

"But see what importance they attach to their chatter," Robinson said in protest.

"Well, study up your impossible society novelists," Hindman remarked with a show of impatience for the other's superior tone, "and get up conversation circles.

It's not bad practice, since it will teach you how to make half a thought last an indefinite period."

"That's about what the trouble was with the novel," Robinson confessed amiably.

The admission encouraged the doctor to begin an assault upon a school of fiction with acrimony that recognized no laws of criticism.

"You are unusually indignant to-night," Robinson said in an unguarded moment.

"And you are one of those who read everything, and pretend to like only the best, and manage to enjoy nonsense," was flung at him.

In the quiet that ensued, Bronski asked his wife:

"Dear, did you meet Raman in New York?"

"No," she explained. "He wasn't the important person he is now." And turning to the doctor, she said, "I believe you learnt to know him while you were in the trades-union movement in New York, did you not?"

"Yes. Our poet-tailor used to recite his lines in strike times, when everything that helped to keep up the courage of the men counted. We made friends because I happened to quote from a poem of his that he read just before I followed him as speaker. He would have done anything for me after that."

"You will find him changed," Robinson remarked, using the opportunity to balance accounts.

"We have all changed," sighed the doctor. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and said, "I don't think he and I will get along. He always carried handfuls of consoling thoughts in his frock-coat pocket for distribution. He has not suffered much. I don't mean physical suffering."

"Perhaps he has been strong," Bronski mumbled sleepily.

"Ah, no! The world always patted him on the back. You'll see! You'll see! Like a child, he won't look at a wrong as the reverse side of actuality. Sentimental people would say he was all soul."

"You mean he has no use for materialism," the woman said.

"Any form of it." The woman lowered her eyes. "I suppose it will surprise him to find what I am."

"Don't you think it would surprise you too?" Robinson asked.

"Why repeat the charge of inconsistency? Mrs. Bronski says I am a materialist. *She* isn't always consistent. But the word to a certain extent interprets my attitude towards the great problems."

"All the time?" the hostess asked, rising and throwing one of the doors of the front room open to get rid of the cigarette smoke.

"What a time you people must have discussing me when I am not here!" the doctor cried cheerfully.

"Vain man!" exclaimed Mrs. Bronski. "Aren't there other people with faults?"

"Ah, only little ones. Mine are so glaring in the light of their logic,—the logic of our friends. Here, for instance, is the charge of inconsistency."

"But I said it because—" Robinson began.

"Because I do not realize your ideal,—I do not pattern myself after the many about me. Really, they ought to be satisfied: I am food for endless discussion. Perhaps they want me to be amusing."

"What makes you imagine that you are a failure that way?" Robinson grinned.

Mrs. Bronski interposed for peace. "I advise you to settle your difficulties all at once," she counselled.

"Although I believe that the doctor is very forgiving,—really!"

"You don't realize our method of keeping on good terms," Robinson hastened to say.

"And are you on good terms with your dental studies?" Bronski asked.

"I suppose I shall be accustomed to the poetry of the profession by the time it secures me a living."

"With the same application to your singing you might have made something of that," said the hostess.

"After all, one is human enough to want comforts," argued Robinson. "Why should I not pay the other fellow for his songs? Perhaps I am very little of the man with a purpose in life. The environment is not conducive to fighting."

"Oh, I gave up all hope of your spiritual survival long ago," Mrs. Bronski scolded.

"A dig at you by proxy," said Robinson to the doctor.

"I intend to show the community what a man it is losing in your swing to the material," said Mrs. Bronski. "I have been thinking of presenting a play before some society that would give a dance with it. The novelty of the thing will make it pay. I intend to cast you for a rôle."

Disregarding the seriousness of the proposition, Robinson plunged into a recital of the balcony scene from 'Romeo and Juliet,' and left the lady the more decided on the venture, for which Hindman had not a word.

"I don't think it would pay," protested Bronski.

"We would not want the money," said his wife. "The interest in the play would be the reward."

Which made him grumble, "They are not worth throwing one's time away on. They are thankless."

"It is the joy of the thing," Mrs. Bronski persisted.

"We will make it above their heads so as to enjoy their stupidity."

"Dear—!" he murmured helplessly.

"If only Mr. Raman would make his début in Philadelphia by writing us a play." She looked over at the doctor.

"Raman hasn't the grip on English," he said.

"And those that would make such a thing pay—the younger generation—know next to nothing of Russian," came from Robinson.

Hindman rose to his feet.

"You will bring him here?" Katherine asked, with detaining fingers upon his sleeve.

"If he will care to come." And the doctor made amends by saying, "I will telephone you."

"Many thanks."

The deserted street rang with the footsteps of the two men. Hindman stared dully before him. His companion, who had been busy with an operatic air, paused to say:

"Bring Raman around. She is very dispirited. I suppose you saw it."

"She'll bore him."

"You haven't eyes in your head: she can entertain. She does even you. You ought to have a good word for her, if for no one else. She deserves the respect of any man."

Hindman asked for a cigarette, and lighting it, went on, quiet to his companion's stream of talk.

CHAPTER II

KATHERINE BRONSKI, in a gown of soft brown, with a carnation in the luxuriant hair that curled back simply from the broad forehead, and a turquoise ring upon a white finger, stood musing over the table in the sitting room, her hands lightly resting upon the white cloth.

"Will it mean much to me? A noble soul. A relief after the failures with which I am surrounded, and who almost consider me one of them. No! No!" with horror and grief. "I have time to do something. I am not beaten entirely!—merely thrust back for the time being. Ah, to have success put out its hand to us! I am cheered already. The hypnotism of success!"

She went to the front room, and tried to lend herself to the lines of a book; the effort persisted but for a few moments. Her eyes snapped with the thought that she could gather about her the best minds in the community; which implied the power to attract, to hold, to fascinate. It must be in part because of the intensity of her ambitions, she told herself. Even Dr. Hindman, cynical and self-contained, could not resist drifting back after periods of absence.

"To have noble friends!" yearned the woman. "Friends whose exultant spirit, knowing not defeat, would spur me on to surmount obstacles!"

Her hands were extended as if in mute supplication, invoking dreams that fled before the stern reality of

the past years. Despite her struggle, she remained chilled, and acknowledged defeat with a gasp of :

" If nothing more, then friends ! "

She paced the room until relief came with the entrance of Robinson, who was humming cheerfully, and who burst into song as he extended his hand. Then he chose the most comfortable seat, and from its depths said—to announce that he realized why she was gowned with unusual attractiveness— :

" Raman came this morning. I ran across the ' Doc ' on his way to the depot while I was going to college. I suppose he telephoned."

" Yes. Then you, too, are eager ! " she cried. " Confess ! "

" Yes. Why not ? The more entertainers in this world, the pleasanter. Otherwise we have too much time to think of ourselves." He hummed again while turning over the pages of a book whose cover had caught his eye. He suddenly asked : " What have you been doing lately ? "

" Nothing ; or rather, reading everything I could lay hands on, and trying to keep my eyes on the pages. It might be called resting. Oh, if only Mr. Bronski had been well last year ! I would have had work with the company this year ; and it is going in for serious work, I hear."

" Unfortunate ! " murmured Robinson. " So you will do nothing this winter ? It is sure to wear you out. You make a mistake. Throw yourself into any kind of work."

" I may open a school of elocution." His silence led her to say, " You are inwardly setting me down for a fool. But I really fear the word ' rest ' that Mr. Bronski uses so often. And then he isn't doing so well in his

drug-store. I begin to realize what it means for the bird that longs for the free air, but gets accustomed to leaping from stick to stick. Do you think *I* will?"

She rose with the ambition-flash in eye and mien, a *Lady Macbeth* to his sympathetic imagination; and he pitied her.

Finding the chair after an interval, she spoke of Raman.

"I am curious. On my last visit to New York I almost decided to ask for an introduction. Somehow, I hesitated. It would be like thrusting myself upon him: you understand. Ah!—"

The door-bell had rung, emptying the room of all sound save the ticking of a small china clock on the bookcase.

"Magil," the woman breathed, disappointed.

And a rosy-cheeked boy of twenty, with features that were classic Greek in outline, burst in, laughing his greeting, and shaking hands with uproarious mirth.

"Signor Robinsono, I saw you strutting down the street scrutinizing every brick in the pavement!" he cried.

"Thoughts turned inwards;—that's all. Didn't mean to miss you," was the answer.

"Glad I didn't break in on so sacred a moment. Well, how we are gotten up!" with a sweeping glance of admiration for the woman.

"An occasion, boy!" she answered.

"Thanks! Yes, I have been away as long as a week; but how did you know that I was—"

She flung a pamphlet at him which he dexterously caught, and read aloud, "'In Defence of Free Speech.'"

"Do they mean to take the bread out of our mouths?" he queried dolorously.

"Oh, it's a protest against police interference with

radical meetings," explained Robinson, "I suppose the fact that you haven't been here for a week is explained by your application at the Law School."

"Oh, we've got the other fellow about ready for skinning. But jokes aside, madam, what is the matter? You look dangerously solemn. *I* came to be entertained."

"S'hush, Tommy! A great man is to be here today."

"What 's he done to deserve it?"

"It 's Alexander Raman," she said with grave deliberateness that failed to impress him.

"What is he?—an escaped Nihilist?"

"Oh, this American generation of not-whats! Don't you really know who Raman is?"

"Well, he's a lucky fellow to be made such an ado over, whoever he may be. There are a few celebrities who do not know me—"

"He's a poet," said the woman with a seriousness that failed to check him.

"Ha! And now, will you please tell us what *we* have done to deserve this?"

She could not restrain a smile at his rush for the door.

"Silly Tommy, he's the greatest writer in Yiddish we have."

"A poet in Yiddish! Worse! Did you ever hear of such an incongruity? Think of 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon the bank' being twisted into Yiddish! It's a wonderful age!"

This time the ring at the door bell was timid.

"Hardly Hindman!" said Robinson.

Magil's "Come in!" followed a slight knock upon the sitting-room door. A groping for the handle ended in the entrance of a girl of twenty, daintily gotten up, short,

well-formed, and with blazing black eyes that mocked her demureness.

Both men bowed. Robinson greeted her in Russian, while the lady of the house shook hands without more than perfunctory politeness. The handshaking was repeated with both the other visitors, and the girl shyly found a seat.

Russian alone was spoken now, much to young Magil's annoyance. He buried himself in the pages of a book from which he would occasionally emerge to catch a glimpse of the wonderful eyes of the new-comer.

Robinson had asked for news from Russia.

"Oh, it is heartbreaking!" was the reply. "A cousin of mine happened to forget to hide some pamphlets, and now he is in for five years. The prisons are full. But it ought not to last. It will not! More and more the people are being roused. It is not human to bear so much!" The face paled with suppressed emotion. Magil asked Mrs. Bronski to interpret.

"She is outraged by conditions in Russia."

"I suppose she is kicking her heels with glee at being here," he remarked.

"Not at all," said Robinson. "Only yesterday she told me that she was thinking of going back to help in the fight. Queer how some people can do things!"

"Not you," laughed Mrs. Bronski. "You'd drink your tea with enjoyment in Purgatory."

"Be precise: sulphur. But you needn't boast of any great interest in the old country," he retorted.

Magil was staring at the girl as upon some sense-startling being; and strove to realize the intended sacrifice.

"Oh, we'll all get civilized by and by!" he broke in with an attempt at seriousness.

"What will you lawyers do for a living?" was Robinson's query.

"Turn to dentistry. Trust civilization to do up a man's means of digestion!" And he displayed a row of white teeth in a broad grin.

They quieted down at the sound of the bell.

"That's Hindman," said Magil. "He has such a modest way of announcing himself that one fears for one's door bell."

"Raman the poet must be with him," Mrs. Bronski confided to the girl visitor.

"Mr. Robinson spoke of a chance of meeting him if I came here to-night, when he saw me yesterday," the latter confessed.

Hindman entered, and with him a man medium in height, garbed in black, his light curling hair brushed back from a prominent forehead that shaded boyish eyes of blue.

"Mr. Raman,—Mrs. Bronski, Mr. Magil, Mr. Robinson, Miss Rovno," Hindman said briefly, indicating each person with a nod of the head.

Raman took their hands firmly. When Miss Rovno said in Russian, "It is an honor," he replied in the same language, softly, "Always an honor for a man or woman to know another in our small world."

Mrs. Bronski touched his hand last. His quiet gaze allowed her to reason, "Hindman has told him nothing about me." She asked him to be seated.

"How quiet your city is!" Raman said. "There is not so much bustle on your stage; although behind the scenes all things must be as with us, I suppose."

He spoke in Yiddish. Mrs. Bronski concluded: "He has had sufficient time to find out to whose house he was going."

Hindman had said curtly :

" The same tinsel, masks, and colored lights."

Mrs. Bronski added :

" And the players and their lines."

" Other people's lines," the doctor hastened to say.

" Yes, but you forget the applause ! " cried Mrs. Bronski.

All drew their chairs closer, aware of the straining after cleverness.

" Ah, if we could only stand off and turn clear eyes upon it," said Raman ; and then, after a pause smilingly, " Why are you so harsh with the tinsel, Hindman ? You forget how much we have to borrow. Is it still the desire with you to shake all things to pieces, and to begin all over again ? "

" Oh, he is all for the shaking of things," laughed Mrs. Bronski.

" And grown tired of the other ? He must have discovered that men are more like mercury than clay. I have only to-day learnt what I should have suspected from his long silence ; not that he does not quarrel on the right side ; but that he does not quarrel at all ! "

" Perhaps I enjoy standing off—" began Hindman haughtily.

" You ! Ah, my friend, some drug must have stifled your restlessness. If you could but see him as I often did,"—to the others—" facing those beautifully-intent, ecstacy-bound listeners, and hear his protest of, 'Must we paint pictures only to amuse you ? Do you not feel that striving impulse that hurls you at the heavens ?' You see,"—apologetically—" he supposed that only you would be strangers to me." And bending forward, Raman laid his hand upon the doctor's knee. Hindman was annoyed.

"Surely you have tea!" he said to the hostess.

She started as if it had been a shout into slumbering ears. Gathering her wits together, she remarked to the poet:

"We meet all difficulties with tea."

"Which explains why we are heavy drinkers," Robinson laughed.

Chatting, they passed through the broad doorway leading into the dining room. Raman had his hand on the doctor's shoulder, and saw him into a seat next to his own.

Much to the disgust of the hostess, Hindman drew the poet into a discussion of the merits of the radical newspaper to which the latter was giving both time and money. Mrs. Bronski managed to extricate the guest of honor from the insufferably prosaic by introducing the topic of the art activity on the other side of the ocean.

Raman was optimistic. "The great changes are moulding the New Man. His work is sure to be beyond our dreams. Whether we will swing to the subtly complex makes no difference."

The hostess interrupted to ask:

"You think that will be wise? Are we not going too far in that direction already?"

"The beauty-instinct of the race, my friend, will stop at no limits. And, after all, are not limit-makers simply afraid of the to-morrow?" He kindled in praise. "Were the dreams ever bigger than now? Could the average man seize as much of truth as he can now?"

"Since the clowns have taken to art," sneered Hindman.

"A twist in the times that makes a misuse of their higher selves," was the answer.

"Whose fault?" cried Mrs. Bronski.

"Why call it fault?" the doctor demanded. "Mankind delights in its intellectual clowns. No scholar has thought of gaining fame by writing a treatise on 'The Amusement Interpretation of History.'"

"No! No!" Mrs. Bronski protested vehemently. "Play is play; and ends are ends. What sweeping statements you make, doctor!"

She fought objections with strange logic and leaping thought, which enlisted Raman's interest if not his sympathy. The phrase oftenest upon her lips,—'The True, The Good, and The Beautiful'—drove the doctor to ask impatiently:

"Will you please enlighten me by what right you make use of those three words in speaking of man's attempt to interpret life *as he lives it?*"

"*As he wishes to live it,* is the only way to explain art, immortal art," she insisted.

"Tell me," said Miss Rovno, who had been at an advantage because the talk had been confined to Russian and Yiddish, "what do you mean by art? I thought I knew; but it is so confusing!"

Hindman nodded his head, and smiled flatteringly upon her. Katherine Bronski plunged into definitions and explanations of definitions until she was breathless. The doctor hastened to say:

"You would have made a good college professor."

"After all," said Raman hastily, "it is really a process of hair-splitting. It may be healthy; but we are always too prejudiced to arrive at any conclusion, in spite of our opponent's efforts."

They marvelled that he had not thrust forward his word as authoritative; and Hindman, who had watched him out of the corner of his eye, grew calm, and mused on the changes which the years had brought.

A period of silence followed, broken only by the clink of glass against saucer. The poet grew restless under the glances shot in his direction, and turning to the doctor, inquired about the labor movement in the town to discover how much his old friend had alienated himself from it.

Hindman began mildly, grew ironical, and then cried: "The parasitic has become the condition of the workers' organization. It is no longer important to have a sense of class-solidarity. Bayonet thrusts and bullets are useless; they accept blows and sneers as a matter of course. They will never doubt their self-appointed leaders. All in all it is beneath contempt. The devil take them!"

"Oh, it is merely the changing years when the boy's voice is marked by falsetto notes," said Raman with assurance. "You will see the flash of eye soon; and he will begin to realize the dreams of the Wise Men. Unless,"—putting his hand on the doctor's shoulder—"all who should lead do not, and forget, forget."

"It is fortunate that you remember." The sneer was perceptible.

"Yes, fortunate,—for myself. There is no doubt about the motive then. Explain it that way if you wish to. I sometimes wonder if there is any other use for the art-gift that has been loaned me."

Mrs. Bronski gave a little cry of protest. The two men ignored her.

"It is true that I have forgotten," said Hindman bluntly. "I haven't been loaned any gift except self-sufficiency. If you prefer, I will say I enjoy standing off."

The poet turned the conversation into different channels, unwilling to continue the scene before the dis-

interested spectators. Among other things he made mention:

"I met sweet, little, round Dr. Ratner to-day. I had no difficulty in remembering him. He was the finest listener that ever dropped in on our New York crowd from Philadelphia. His is the same rotundity, the same wholesome sweetness. He makes the world look very satisfying by his mere smile. But he ended up by scaring me a little. He wants me to meet certain Goldmans the day after to-morrow."

"You agreed to go?" asked Mrs. Bronski.

"Yes; since he was very insistent. And who are the Goldmans?"

"Bourgeoisie," answered Hindman, rolling the word easily off his tongue as if from habit. "Having money, they entertain. A new departure on their part: they are desirous of securing a standing among the intellectuals of the community. Whenever my sense of humor craves for delicacies, I go to see them—in the company of Ratner who is really an able fellow, though dreadfully lazy. His wife—a member of the Goldman family—has to arouse him to duty and dollars when the night-bell rings by using a wet sponge. If you were a novelist, the Goldmans would interest you mightily. All that is left you as a poet is to go and enjoy the fine table they spread."

"Doc, you're a paradoxical cure for the blues," chirped Magil.

The street door opened and closed.

Katherine Bronski, into whose cheeks the color stole, said softly:

"It must be Mr. Bronski. He could really not find time to come home early from his drug-store though he knew you were to be here, Mr. Raman."

Before the latter could frame a suitable reply, David Bronski entered. He was slightly confused at the sight of the stranger, but quickly extended his hand when his wife said, "My husband, Mr. Raman;" and hastened to offer his excuses for his late appearance. He looked old and worn as he stood there in the full light, the few grey hairs at all angles, the jaw hanging, and the eyes lifeless.

Getting into a seat at the foot of the table, he put a multitude of questions to the poet.

"Do go up and change your coat," Katherine pleaded.

"Ah, dear, Mr. Raman will excuse a man who is too tired to think of his personal appearance," came in reply with a nervous laugh.

"If it is at all on my account," cried Raman, "do not put yourself out;" and continued the conversation as though there had been no interruption.

Bronski gave expression to his thoughts bluntly, and did not hesitate to differ, even to the point of vehemence, with his honored guest.

"Mind," he said in Russian, "I do not say that I prefer gloom to your optimistic view of men; but they are such fools most of the time! See how they accept what even a dog would turn against. Or if they bite, see how foolishly! There is no hope in them. We must appeal to those above."

"There is no above for appeal outside the man we are talking about," said Raman, his voice a little higher than when he had discussed art. "Every man has his above and below. And the moment seeks it out in that man. It is unfortunate when we must ignore most those concerned most."

"Yes, yes,—but that brings us nowhere," Bronski protested. "For instance, you are a writer; you lead."

"No; I merely listen, and repeat. If I did not, no one would understand me. Please remember, also, that man sees his way clearer than he has ever seen it, thanks to the many currents of thought in which he moves. He may not split hairs; and he has no patience for the man who does. Don't forget that we are discussing leadership, not art;"—which last saved him from a word onslaught threatened by several.

"Then there is no leadership?" cried Bronski.

"We mean different things by the word."

"It is strange, certainly strange!" murmured Bronski. "You depend too much on them. They will bring up nowhere."

"To me each individual is the sum total of nature's dreams. 'Purpose' would be a simpler word."

"You would deny the degenerate, then?" asked Hindman.

"Now you are forcing me upon strange ground. You have your scientific answer. I can only say that we trail off into the unknowable at each end of our reasoning."

"I forgot it was your province to play with the unknowable," scoffed the doctor.

"Oh, my dear friend, how often have I heard you men of science try to analyze the word 'thought'! In your generous moments you allow that my dreaming is surer." His tone was sharp.

"How vain!" laughed the doctor, pleased to have shaken his composure.

"I had to be sure of something," Raman laughed in turn.

Conversation soon spun itself out on frame of lighter mood.

The evening had gone far when the poet got to his feet. All followed his example except Robinson, who

felt that Mrs. Bronski would wish a few moments with him to discuss the man who had fallen among them.

"You must come in often since you are in our city, Mr. Raman," Bronski urged, as he took his hand. "It will be a pleasure."

"Yes," his wife added simply.

At the corner of the street, Hindman and the poet parted from Miss Rovno and Magil. The doctor laughed as soon as the younger people were out of hearing, and explained to the other man the conversational difficulties which threatened the youthful pair.

"No matter," said the poet. "He is a fine-looking boy, and she does not lack beauty. Trust mother nature to invent a common language where every sound will have a multitude of meanings. It's a beautiful night, Hindman."

"From the inside of your skull out," was the rejoinder.

At the home of the Bronskis all were silent immediately following the departure of the guests. Then Katherine said softly to Robinson:

"Well—?"

"I like him. He is stubbornly simple; refuses to talk over our heads. And that is surprising when one remembers his dreamer's life."

"He does not pose," said the woman.

"Too much faith," commented Bronski.

"A straw enough for him to swim by, eh?" said Robinson; and had his smile of satisfaction for the soundness of the comparison.

"Too much faith!" burst from Katherine. "How can you say it? We reject everything,—even the man who beautifully accepts! What is left us? Even if

his standpoint were one of reconciliation, he should be above criticism. Why cannot we be fair?"

Bronski said with a shrug:

"Why get so excited over it? We have known all this before. It is not new. And we have lived our lives satisfactorily without him and his views."

The woman reflected sadly, "Yes, we have."

Robinson rose to go, a trifle moody after the exhilaration of the past hours. Katherine said her "good-night" absently. The visitor, accustomed to coming and going without much ado, made his way to the door unaccompanied.

Mrs. Bronski sat staring before her. Suddenly her eyes sought her husband's face. He was dozing.

CHAPTER III

AN attractive three-story house on the northern extremity of the Jewish quarter was lighted up, two days later, to an extent strange to the neighbors who spoke of a possible suitor, and did not even stop short at the exact amount of the dowry,—a field for inexhaustible speculation.

Within the house all was bustle. Servants flew back and forth between kitchen and dining room ; while over all presided a woman of thirty, stern in speech and mien, whose position commanded a view of a mirror towards which the small, dark eyes often wandered for a glimpse of a face of marked intelligence.

"How long will it take Jennie to dress?" she asked irritably in Yiddish of a tiny, docile, black-wigged woman who was passing through the room.

"Well, she must dress," came with reproachful calmness ; and the tiny woman continued her way towards the kitchen where a little man sat in an arm-chair, his beady-grey eyes fixed upon the servants to whom he issued orders with a lordly air.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he asked her—in Yiddish—in a tone that suggested lurking doubts to be dispelled.

"It is for Jennie's sake. If she is beholden in his eyes, won't it be worth all the expense? I did not think Sarah would take so much interest. She has an eye for everything, and has worked all day without a rest."

"Not for Jennie," complained the man. "Perhaps she thinks *she* isn't good enough. I know you will believe it nonsense, but I am sure Sarah is taken up with the great man herself."

"Could he make a living for Jennie?" the woman asked without any anxiety.

"Who knows these writers! They are wild! wild! And he will expect a dowry God alone knows how big! Well, he shall not get more than fifteen thousand dollars. Let people deceive him if they wish to about what he may expect. But not more than fifteen thousand dollars!" And the little man glared into space.

"He has a big name, as big as a doctor's or lawyer's," murmured his wife soothingly.

"Yes, of course Jennie shall have the best!"

And they sat dreaming amidst the clatter of dishes.

"Ah, the bell!" they cried. The man asked, "Is Henry down? Yes, he is here!"

The new-comer was short, with massive head, and black eyes that at one moment were shifty, the next sharp and piercing. He wore a tuxedo coat, and a large diamond sparkled in his shirt-front.

"Why don't you go into the dining room?" he said brusquely. "You hide in the kitchen like—like—I don't know what." The word "servants" had been on his tongue, but he was considerate of their feelings.

The couple followed him out. They were informed by the impatient lady who supervised the ordering of the table that two young men had arrived,—the first of the guests.

"Students," she said, wrestling with a knot in the strings of the apron that protected her velvet dress. "Paulson and Gorun. Jennie isn't down yet. Henry, *can't* you help me take the apron off?"

He loosened the knot. The little woman took the opportunity to ask :

" How much will it cost, Sarah ? "

" We will have time afterwards to count it up. We have other things to bother about now."

The bell rang again. At the same moment a girl descended the hall-stairs, and ignoring the whispered calls from the dining room, went to the guests, taking with her the new-comer,—a tall young man of decided Jewish aspect who wore a shiny frock coat.

" Jehudah Halevy Berenson," whispered Sarah ; and swept grandly into the parlor, conscious of her rôle as hostess.

" How do you do, Mrs. Goldman ? " came from the early arrivals, who lounged at their ease in the plush-upholstered chairs.

She bowed gravely, and took a seat near a pale, ill-formed girl attired in costly white silks. After a critical survey of the young woman's appearance, she asked in careless tones :

" What's new, gentlemen ? "

They spoke of their return to college, and the girl in white giggled at their jokes. She suddenly said with an arch glance at a light-complexioned, dull-faced boy of twenty :

" Play something, Mr. Gorun."

" You know I'm pretty bad at it," Mr. Gorun protested ; but gracefully surrendered to the general request.

Conversation continued briskly while he essayed selections from an opera on a piano whose veneer had determined its selling price.

" Ain't that sweet ! " cried the girl addressed as Jennie by the woman in velvet. " I heard a grind organ play it this morning."

"I hope it did better than me," laughed the performer who was cracking his fingers in the hope of securing better technique.

"Oh, this grind organ was all right!"

Jehudah Halevy Berenson, bending his long body forward, asked gravely:

"You expect Mr. Raman early, Mrs. Goldman?"

"It's hard to tell. He's from New York, you know." They held their sides at the pleasantry.

The man of the tuxedo coat entered at this moment, and shook hands with the students.

"He's famous, eh?" came from Mr. Paulson whose leisure occupied itself with curling the ends of an almost invisible mustache.

"Famous!" cried Berenson looking his contempt over his gold nose glasses at the other man's ignorance. "He's a poet! When he writes about nature, there you are. If it's the sea, you hear it plainly; if the woods, you can almost smell the fragrance of the trees, and see the crossed branches overhead. And then, he's quite a philosopher, too. No man has been more a friend of the lower classes. I suppose you don't know he comes from the same town I do."

"You don't say!" was the chorus.

"He must know my people, although he won't remember me, for I was a kid when he went to America. He left a big reputation behind, you bet! A Talmud boy, every bit of one, who knows his Hebrew better than your professor of Semitics. He would have made a great rabbi. You boys miss a lot when you don't know Yiddish. He's a bigger poet than you've got in English;" —a sweeping remark which brought Gorun to his feet with a formidable list.

"Well," Berenson insisted, "you don't know Yid-

dish, and therefore can form no judgment in the matter."

Mr. Goldman added:

"He is certainly a big man,—a dreamer. Many a time when I'd come back from the store I'd take a dip into his poems. They are genuinely refreshing. I could in his lines live over again my old life in Russia. Really an exceptional, ideal man."

"We haven't got too many," his wife hazarded.

"I hope it pays him," Jennie artlessly added.

"Pays him? Yes." Goldman spoke authoritatively. "He is a contributor to many newspapers, although he is beginning to confine himself to the radical press alone. I remember when I first came over here and learnt to set type for a Yiddish printing house, Raman was just rising to fame. And the proprietor of the printing house,—who was a Socialist and crazy about the young poet,—would have us knock off work while he read his poems to us, knowing he could read them well. That was only seven years ago."

"Is Mr. Raman a Socialist now?" Paulson asked with eyes strained to the horror of the implication.

"Oh, I suppose you would call him an idealist," Goldman said reassuringly.

The student body was increased to seven by the entrance of four physically-divergent types of the Russian Jew. A few minutes later a little round man rolled in, and greeted them with a grin and cry of, "How are the children?"

They received him uproariously, with sallies that found him helplessly rubbing the bald head fringed with red hair.

Three more students entered, adding to the pandemonium.

"He said he would be here early, Ratner?" Goldman asked.

"What was the use of talking about early or late to a man who was not ready to come at all," said the little man. And turning to the students, he cried, "How many lawyers-to-be are there in this crowd?"

Seven raised their hands.

He said with a wry face, "I know the rest will be docs."

"Seven to three," cried a student. "You don't know when you're lucky."

"The community won't be," grinned Ratner. And as he heard Hindman's voice in the hall, he said to Goldman, "That's him. The two go together everywhere, so I made it a point to see both."

A young woman who strikingly resembled Goldman slipped into the room; and coming over to Ratner, said, "I put the children to bed at last. That's Raman now. I walked in just behind him."

All watched the door. Those acquainted with the work of the poet were eager to meet him; the majority of the students were merely curious.

When he appeared, Ratner took it upon himself to present him to everyone, adding "student," when a man might be thus honored.

"Quite a gathering of bookmen!" Raman said, and shook their hands warmly, much to Goldman's satisfaction. The host thought, "It was an excellent idea to have the college-men. He couldn't meet a more brilliant crowd anywhere in Philadelphia."

Hindman had said his "good evening" stiffly, and had slipped into a corner with the thought, "How did I come to forget that they had a daughter to marry off? The parents are being kept out of the way until our poet

will find satisfaction in the girl." He leaned over to a student and asked, "Did you know Raman was to be here?"

"Yes. There was a meeting of the Philosophical Club day before yesterday, and Doc Ratner told us."

"What happened at the Club?"

"A long paper on contemporary English poetry by Gorun."

"Let me tell you, that was a mighty good paper," another student who was within hearing assured Hindman. "It showed that he had looked it up a bit."

"Looked it up, did he?" the doctor said with the shadow of a smile in the cold eyes. "I suppose you discussed it."

"Oh, we were too sleepy," student number one confessed.

Goldman had been showering questions upon the poet who had not been entirely at ease under the many curious eyes. Jehudah Halevy Berenson unwittingly came to his rescue by making known to him that they were fellow-townsmen. At once Raman was alive with queries that concerned mutual acquaintances in the distant Russian village.

"Your mother's wonderful knowledge of Hebrew is still the talk of the town," the young man told him.

The host asked sympathetically:

"Your parents are dead, Mr. Raman?"

"These last ten years," was the brief reply; and the poet gave his undivided attention to Berenson until Goldman, to save the evening, said in a loud voice:

"Let us go into the dining room. We can talk around the table."

He led the way with Mrs. Goldman.

The loaded table lighted up many eyes, although it

was not a surprise to the students who had been fêted before in the hope that they would furnish a suitor for Jennie.

The seat of honor seemed to be opposite that young lady and next to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Goldman, and was duly assigned to the poet after he had been introduced to the parents of Jennie.

"What do you think of contemporary English poetry, Mr. Raman?" was the first question put him by Gorun.

Raman's opinion, not coinciding with the results of that young man's investigations which had been brought before the Philosophical Club, was in the main rejected by the student body, although the objections were not put forward.

"Do try some of these cakes," Mrs. Goldman coaxed. And turning squarely upon the poet, she began a conversation, while the others gave themselves to the edibles before them.

"You like Philadelphia?" was the start she made.

"A difficult question to answer after three days of chance observation," he smiled. "Yet I can say that I am far from disappointed."

"Of course we don't do things in the big way you do them in your city."

"You do them pleasantly as it is," made the lady happy. "For one thing, your interest is centered in your homes."

"Well, we in this house have just begun to put our business worries aside. You don't look down on money-making?"

He evaded the blunt question by saying, "Society regards it as the greatest gift, since it pays it most liberally."

Mr. Goldman hastened to change the subject.

"You think Yiddish will be permanent?" he asked.

"I hardly think I can frame a satisfactory reply. No one feels the fallibility of his work and its instrument as does the literary man. If great work will be done in Yiddish, it will last. But you frighten the man of letters when you use the word permanency, which at least might imply a half dozen hundred years," said Raman.

"Surely you consider Shakespeare permanent!" Berenson, who was near the poet, remarked.

"What he has written that is either race-truth or race-longing mankind will treasure up. But we cannot guess what the coming man will want. Perhaps the whole aspect of our art will disgust him, even though we think we have based much of it on universal principles. When we remember how even now our art disgusts certain individuals who have gained a vantage point, we are left very hesitating about trying to cover infinite ground with a temporal leg."—("His English is remarkable," Goldman confided to a neighbor.)—Raman was saying, "Let us always be sympathetic in criticism."

"Which means to keep our balance," Berenson discovered.

"There never is a balance. Nature's scales always tip one way."

"Correct!" cried Goldman loudly.

"But I should think that your outlook on the future of art would dishearten you in your work," spoke up a student who was paying some attention, having grown tired of eating.

("It takes Pollock to stump a fellow!" came in a whisper that was audible in the sudden silence which had followed Goldman's lusty exclamation of agreement.)

"Why dishearten?" asked Raman. "It has been well said that we are part of the affirmative soul of the

world. And so we must speak,—as well as we can. I think you understand."

"What would you call the spirit of negation?" came from Hindman.

"Well, I might say it was the challenging spirit. That does not mean the pessimistic; not denial, mind you."

"Ah!" Hindman vouchsafed, as if to mock the uncertainty which he suspected.

"Not denial, because it is assertive," the poet put forword as argument. "Else there would be times of complete standstill."

Young Gorun asked why it would not make for a balancing.

"Because the destructive spirit fails unless it has the germs of reconstruction within itself."

"What about our pessimism, which creeps into even our art?" demanded Pollock.

"Oh, that is but the pessimism of word, not deed. And the note is most prominent among the reactionaries who howl that God has gone from the heavens, because they dare not look ahead."

Raman, though thankful for the discussion because it had saved him from the feeding, began to weary of the hair-splitting. He turned with relief to Mrs. Goldman, interested in her earnest manner of dealing with trifles; and his lighter tone pleased her.

The students had been disposing of fruit, cake, and wines with marvellous rapidity, ably seconded by Dr. Hindman who was too bored by the conversation about him to wish to take part in it. He found much amusement in watching how Mrs. Goldman entertained the poet.

Having swept the table almost clean, there was a gene-

ral movement toward the parlor. Gorun was coaxed into rendering his memorized selections from the opera that formed his repertory. Several students, under the influence of the wine of which they had partaken liberally, attempted a vocal accompaniment, amid laughter and shouting.

Raman was listening to Mrs. Goldman's account of how she had helped to build up her husband's finances. He agreed with her that Mr. Goldman was wise in retiring from business to gain leisure for culture. And he listened curiously to her confession that hers was a restlessness that would have to find outlet in work; and that she was desirous of taking up the study of law.

She asked no advice. Her mental robustness left him an eager listener, and when he spoke, it was to say:

"It is well. Realize yourself perfectly. Grasp all you can of the things that make life full of purpose."

"My training has been valuable," she told him. "I was taught human nature across the store counter. I am not easily discouraged."

"Your ambition should make you happy."

In a corner of the dining room the parents of Jennie were discussing the poet.

"He did not look at her," grumbled the father, "Someone would think he honored us. Sarah was of more interest to him."

"Have patience," said the woman. "What can you expect? He will come again and again; and then he will not be so shy. Why did we need all those students? How beautiful she was this evening!"

"Like a flower! to think that we have to give fifteen thousand dollars with her! They are blind! blind!"

"But he will use it for her."

"I suppose so," said the man with a sigh. "Let us

call her out. She is altogether too quiet. We must speak a few words to her."

The result was that when the poet rose to go, Jennie approached him, and urged him to call again.

Goldman added, "An evening like this is not to be forgotten. You must come again."

His wife said, "I want to thank you for the hours you spent with us."

Some of the students declared themselves honored. He was invited to come to the Philosophical Club; and Berenson suggested that he read a paper before it.

"I am a busy man," Raman offered as excuse. "All my spare time just now is occupied with the study of English in which I hope to do some work before long."

"A hard language, eh?" Berenson laughed.

"Like a restless steed, its management so takes up our time, that we forget to enjoy the riding."

At last, much to the relief of both the doctor and Raman, they found themselves in the open air. The poet drew a long breath to clear his senses, and asked:

"Do you know who is the biggest individual there?"

"Oh, yes! I noticed she took time to impress the fact upon you. Do you care to hear the antecedents of the lady?"

"If it won't be a matter of listening to anything too glaring or too caustic."

"Do you think I can weave moonshine into the lives of these bourgeoisie?" And Hindman began: "Goldman made his money by the sort of sharp practice that is sometimes condemned by his own class."

"How quickly you can find a good word for even those you detest when you forget yourself!"

"Oh, I didn't say everybody had Goldman's courage. That's the reason he got his money together quickly. He

had helped his parents build up a store to which three sons, the parents, the daughter, and, until recently, Mrs. Goldman, gave sixteen hours a day. Goldman used to call himself an idealist. And you needn't pity him, because he's happier where he is. He boasts that he just missed getting hung for active propaganda work among the peasants. A doubtful story even for the reign of Alexander III. But they wouldn't hang him for his ideas now. Not here, where at most they let each man hang himself."

"Come now! The story!"

"Well, she was a sales-girl in the store, uneducated and lacking in both refinement and beauty. And she rose from servant in that establishment to mistress of it; won this Goldman who is neither a fool nor blind. Mind you, there is no love between them. Merely respect. His for her ability; hers for his cleverness. Good mating. Hers is a remarkable personality. In taking to you, she shows that there is something of the sentimental deep down in her nature."

"She is going in for law, she said."

"And you may bet everything you have that she will succeed. She is the only woman who rattles me," confessed the doctor. "I have to put on a bold front, or I'd talk the nonsense you did to-night."

"Was it bad? There may have been seeming contradictions—"

"Oh, I suppose you try to square yourself with your feelings. Never mind. Only *I* noticed it."

"Oh, well, mine was the case of a man trying to think as quickly as he could talk. It's excellent practice."

"The students will say you are an intellectual freak."

"My quarrel was only with those who wrote their text-books."

They walked on in silence. At last the doctor said :

" And you really intend to make it all winter ? "

" Yes, if everybody will get so thoroughly acquainted with me that I will be less of a novelty, and will be left to my work. What a world, Hindman ! It's like the unrolling of the great scroll in the synagogue which used to fascinate me as a boy. But here the mystery never ends, thanks to the subtilty of the forces within and about us."

"A game of chess has endless combinations," suggested Hindman.

" But confess that when we're taken out of the box to be pushed about the black and white squares, it is delightful to think of what master-forces are behind us."

" *May be* behind us," corrected the doctor.

" You would call it the processes of life playing against time ? "

" Don't bother me with your metaphysics. One thing is certain,—that when we are put back into the box we are done with for all time. Fortunately ! Let us talk of something more sensible."

CHAPTER IV

DR. HINDMAN'S little examining room was darkened by the clouds that made grey the sky and the thoughts of the man who was absently gazing out of the window, his arms crossed, his head on his breast. He suddenly sighed, passed his hand through the thin hair that showed traces of white, and with a restless motion brushed aside the medical journal that lay before him. Lighting a cigarette, he took a turn about the room,

"It's two days now. He must be working," he said aloud. "Yes, he has grown self-satisfied. Would preach to me, to all of us. That's success. To jump over a few obstacles, and to announce one's self as a mountain climber!"

He turned to a past that loaned him satisfying memories; he smiled at triumphant scenes; then almost snarled; and regretted that Raman had come to Philadelphia.

A book at his elbow, a collection of poems loaned him by Raman to awaken his interest in a recent school of English poetry, made him exclaim:

"How seriously very young men take themselves! This one stands on a step-ladder trying to paint the sky. I wonder if Raman left New York to escape some admirer! His reasons have been inadequate. A virtuous man—in his way."

He took up the medical journal again, and gave him-

self to an article that finished with a criticism by a famous surgeon who had been asked to comment.

"So it is! Just because the writer is a young man! What a fight to crawl to the top! And then they fossilize."

A ring of the bell made him turn his head.

"I hope that visit won't be a distant one."

It proved to be Raman whose smile visibly brightened the man before him.

"Well," cried the visitor, "despite the gloomy afternoon, we will make a cheerful hour of it. Have you been alternating between the medical journal and the book of poems?"

"I was more partial to my own profession. The photograph of that diseased limb seems to frighten you."

"Let me ask you, Hindman: are you passive to the sight of suffering?"

"Is this going to be a lecture, or merely a quizz?" cried the doctor.

"Don't tell me that I am a bore. I will be prone to believe you," the visitor laughed.

"I have forgiven so much that I may as well continue to be lenient. It answers partly your last question." Both laughed. Then Hindman said seriously, "I am entirely passive. There was a time when I used to rage at the sort of medicines they compounded for the poor in the clinics. But I was a fool, and soon discovered the fact. It is useful to be hardened."

"There is so much of the brute still left in us that we haven't even decent sensitiveness. An impersonal remark, Hindman."

"I believe you. And so they invite a sensitive man for an evening and test his nerves."

The poet smiled; and then said, "The Goldmans thought first of pleasing."

"*I* thought the strain of that evening had driven you to isolation,—or to New York."

"I would have informed you if I had considered the second step necessary. The truth is I am giving my spare time to a tragedy in blank verse. It is absorbing me. In Yiddish, of course."

"Not a leaf out of your own life?"

"You think many of the leaves would furnish me material?"

"True. You seem happy."

"Cheerful, is a better way of putting it. At the first sign of a dark mood, I bury myself in work. And sometimes I get through a great amount of it. I would not believe that you could be deceived by externals."

"I see so little of you," replied the doctor.

"You are good enough not to say that you are fortunate. What do you make a year out of your practice?"

"The sum is so small that I am too ashamed to mention it. I don't go out of my way to get more than a living. At one time I thought that I would attempt surgical work. But there is no use harboring wishes for their own sake."

"You are not moving among ambitious men."

The other flushed, and said:

"Raman, you have a queer way of making a person feel like a boy."

There was so much of restrained anger in his voice that the visitor was abashed.

"I thought I could talk plainly," he said.

"Why shouldn't we? But you forget that though my view and outlook may be queer, they are mine."

"Don't let's quarrel. Which reminds me to ask you how they look at you in the several radical camps."

"I can give you an exact idea by saying that they have stopped discussing me," Hindman said with a grin. "They shrug their shoulders at the mention of my name. By the way, they give their dance next week. Go. You will meet some interesting people."

"Your town has its quota."

"So it thinks. I suppose the Bronskis will not forgive me for not bringing you down again."

"They were in my thoughts several times. You have been so vague about them, that I believe I have a false impression of their life and their relation to each other."

"Yes? I won't ask you why. You may be unable to clear yourself." The doctor watched the curling smoke of his cigarette with a peculiar smile. "Her history is interesting. If you are going to stay in our community, you might as well get acquainted with the people," he argued against the protesting lift of the other's hand. "The recital will not shock you. It is not a medical joke." He pulled languidly on his cigarette, and began:

"She came to New York with an aunt,—a little cut-and-dried woman who practices medicine there. You ought to know her—Dr. Isfeld."

"A great individualist."

"A born fighter. Well, Katherine worked hard, made good use of the early training she got in Russia, and was on the road to happiness; when suddenly she stumbled upon the fact that she had talent as an elocutionist."

"The voice," Raman said, "is good, although it is not pure. But emotion could compensate for that."

"Well, don't interrupt until I come to the crucial

point in her history. She fell in love (this was in New York, of course) with a young man who didn't care a rap for her,—a lawyer at present making money in machine politics, but who then called himself a Socialist. You may remember Roseblitt. I don't know what she saw in him,—"

"He was clever."

"Yes, in a small way. Well, embittered, she turned to Bronski who was paying attention to her. He had divorced his wife, a woman with some money of her own. Their children—some of them—are as old as Katherine. Well, he, very happy that the young woman saw something in him to like, took her to Philadelphia, sent her to a school of acting, and they set up a home. Her dream, I suppose, was to become a great actress, and to laugh at Roseblitt for his stupidity."

Raman allowed a gesture of impatience to escape him.

"Well, why not?" asked Hindman. "To get the story shorter, she made her début in a tragic play; and the community went almost in a body to see her, and were absurdly wild over her acting. Bronski, drunk with joy, carried her to her carriage. It was a great day! a great day!"

The eyelids lowered over the merciless eyes to revive the picture. Raman, guessing the after years, murmured, "Poor woman! Poor woman!"

"Yes, it was pitiful. Of course the play had been given at her expense: I mean it was not a regular company. After a long search and wait she managed to secure some small part with a touring star. Bronski happened not to be well, and she came home;—of her own accord, she claims."

"A restless type," Raman mused.

"Well, do you know that a certain sort of seriousness is often frivolity? She lacks intellect."

"Out go your labels!" the poet protested.

"Oh, she's a mixture of labels. I forgive her everything,—even Bronski. She would have thrown him over had she succeeded."

"*You* forgive!" Raman cried sternly.

"That past makes my dreams," said Hindman without compunction. "I lived intensely; more so than the majority of men. To regret it is to regret having lived."

"You would want to repeat it?"

"Well, no. It seems silly now; like the rest of the game I played. Why make a fuss over yesterday's tea? It seems a contradiction to you? We are ethical beings some days, when we get a good sweeping view—in cold blood. Tell me, why did you leave New York? You may want quiet here for your work—"

"It *is* quieter."

"You mean you will be left alone?"

"Suppose I allow that your guess is good—"

"Well, I *am* curious."

"The woman was foolish. I thought it was my duty to go."

"Ah, we don't properly appreciate men like you in our age," came in a tone of banter. "What were you about to do? take a walk? It don't look like rain after all."

"Yes, I was out for a loaf. I intend to 'do' your street where the fashionables promenade. No! No!" as Hindman got to his feet. "You ought not."

"What's the matter?" asked the doctor.

"Don't leave your office. Someone may come in. It's wrong. These are your hours, aren't they?"

"Oh, the office won't run away. But maybe you're right; something expects to be born into our kingdom of heaven, and I must be of help."

"I," smiled Raman, "am finishing a golden poem; and despite the day, there shall be no dark threads. I suppose there is no poetry in your view of a tiny spark being thrust into our world."

"None at all. Not the least! When the child is dead, I sometimes feel relieved, brutal as it may sound. The mud grows lots of weeds, Raman."

The poet's eyes darkened; but he put out his hand.

Hindman, when he was alone, mused:

"I was right about the woman. It is possible for a man to get far away from earth. But he's just the one to find it under him suddenly. I expressed myself a little too brutally to suit his sensitive soul." His laugh was interrupted by the ringing of the door bell. "It is well I stayed after all. "I'll have something to finish the day with."

A girl darted in, crying breathlessly:

"Please come quick, Doctor! Mother's very sick!"

"All right. I'll be there right away. Go home."

He took up a satchel containing obstetrical instruments, and prepared to follow the girl, saying as he slipped into his overcoat:

"Another dark thread in a poem; seven in all, and an income of ten dollars a week. And this maker of verse thinks I am brutal. Idiots!"

The poet on his way through the Jewish quarter was often greeted with a lift of the hat, although the men stood too much in awe of him to venture upon an exchange of words.

He experienced a feeling of relief when he reached

the fashionable thoroughfare where well-garbed men and women strolled by neat shops and chatted in careless tones. In seeking an explanation for his strange relish of the ease and idleness which was on parade, he decided that the absence of worry on the faces of the many about him had won him for the time being from his hostile position.

Suddenly, familiar features came into sight, and a woman cried joyfully as she held out her hand, "Mr. Raman, how do you do?"

"Mrs. Bronski, how are you?"

Their warm handclasp attracted attention; and to save her from the embarrassment of a conversation before that moving crowd, the poet said, "Since I am strolling aimlessly, suppose I go down the street with you?"

"Splendid!"

They moved back into the stream of pedestrians.

"I always stumble upon friends here," said the woman. "They all seem to prefer it to the busy adjoining highways. You were quick to discover its merits."

"These good people are so little concerned with the to-morrow—to all appearances—that one acquires boundless good humor by merely looking at them," he explained. "You see how fastidious I am sometimes."

"Is that the reason why you have not paid us another visit?" she asked merrily.

"You are taking an unfair advantage," he said in lieu of anything more to the point. "And, again, I was not speaking of friends. Believe me, my work during the last few days tied me up unsparingly." He caught the titles of the books she carried. "Our Scandinavian Shakespeare!"

"I suppose so. But he and I are not on good terms. He brings us into such an odd world! I am an individ-

ual perfectly satisfied with the shortcomings of this one, you know," she laughed.

"I suppose you say that because you know I have a standing quarrel with it," he replied lightly; "and so I enjoy closing the door against it with this man. Really, he is a big-shouldered fellow."

"He seems to me all head, and no heart. Rather trying to an interpreter, because he is too much a pedagogue."

"Well, I, too, prefer to take my time with him leisurely over the printed page instead of watching some fanciful interpreter. Northern Europe is doing the sanest thinking in the world, I believe. The courageous front presented there to every problem is exhilarating."

"Of course you know that our friend Dr. Hindman is an authority on the gentleman under dispute."

"In the same way as of old? Or has his worship changed to admiration?"

"Worship! You know at most *we* can only admire the doctor," she said.

"He was beautiful."

"And now he is an iceberg. He can only laugh."

Raman was indulgent with her indignation.

"If you could have known him eight years ago! He was an inspiration. We all looked up to him. He was like a trumpet call."

"He scolds us terribly."

"To keep from being scolded himself. It is natural. A very sensitive man."

"Would you call him a failure?" came hesitatingly.

There being one at his side, Raman chose his words with great care.

"I always hesitate to explain spent effort. Hindman may have latent energy. Some great force may awaken

him; and he will be curiously wonderful because of this very period."

"Still," came sharply, "it is depressing to find men and women who fold their hands and seem to wait for nothing except the end."

"Perhaps they have originally demanded too much. Remember, we can always dream bigger than we can do. But," with a glance overhead, "let us not succumb to the influence of a dark sky."

"Oh, it is not that. Although I will admit that grey moods seize me when they are least desirable. And after depression will come a wave of energy that will make a girl of me. I think that we are all more or less at the mercy of our moods,—except, possibly, the dollar-seeking theatrical manager."

With the joy of the task she unmercifully flayed the stage master; and drifted naturally to a discussion of her hopes and fears, spreading them before him with a yearning so pathetic that he murmured:

"You must allow for the brute struggle about us."

"But is it possible that ability can be refused a hearing, and the world acquiesce?" she cried.

"Such is the fatality of man's brute descent that the flowering of the race is rare."

"Then it is folly to persist?"

"Why so? It is our protest against the ignoble ordering of things."

"I know—your Socialism. But I won't put myself on the rack as a protest. It isn't that I am in need of bread."

"The divine is bound up with the material—at least in this world. Being more ready to accept this one than any other,—but perhaps I am touching a thing sacred with you—?"

"Not at all."

"Well, let me say that I received quite an education in the importance of the material when I worked at the machine. You underrate the little things because to you they happen to be second thought."

"But you rose above it all by sheer effort of will."

"You mean above my old way of earning a livelihood? No, it was by accident. I happened to be able to sing the song the worker wanted. Had my muse then taken to loftier flights, I might have gone mad. If you but knew the numbers who are singing the 'Song of the Shirt' who could make life nobler if life was decent to them! Many, unfortunately, who managed to climb out of the grave spit on those who remain buried. You can understand, my friend, why I consider much of my work a duty."

She was learning to know the man. His outburst pleased her,—less because of the text, than because of the fact that the serene philosopher in him had been so quickly thrust aside.

"We all have our hobbies," she hazarded.

"In the long run their value is measured by their nobility. Although a Scientific Socialist would have put it in reverse fashion."

They paused at a street-corner to wait for a car on which Mrs. Bronski was to continue home. She asked:

"You intend to be at the dance given by the radicals?"

"Possibly;—seeing that twice within an afternoon it has been brought to my notice. You participate?"

"In a humble way. I am to recite. They always make it a point to honor me. It is laughable to watch the dissipation of patience in the audience when it is subjected to a long programme. So I take care to be among the first. Ours is a strange community."

"The strangeness of it grows with intimacy;"—a general reflection from which she accepted a particular meaning; and was silent until her words of thanks dismissed him after he had helped her on the car.

He was thoughtful as he walked home.

"She may be an able woman," he granted. "Much is often accomplished in the world of art that is not due to intellect." Later he confessed: "An unusually interesting woman; for the very reason of her unfairness, I suppose." He was forced to ask the question, "Why did she give herself to Bronski? Was it for the reasons Hindman suggested? I am brutal! And again, has she not been sufficiently punished? How hideous!"

When almost at the house where he had his room, he said with a shrug, "I know very little indeed of women!"

He took his seat at his work-table; and pushing aside the crowding books, spread out the pages of a letter which had been handed him below stairs.

"The foolish girl!" he groaned. "How quickly she discovered my new address! From whom? They will have reason to laugh."

The Russian before him said:

"So you have gone! The sun is not as bright now. Everything seems as spiritless as myself. I am so lonely with the money-mad people; as if severed from all things living.

"You, whose mission it is to look into the innermost recesses of our hearts must understand this. If you could but understand it as I do at this moment!

"And so you have gone, leaving here the night and gloom. What is left me? The very beggar in the street is happier than I.

"When I heard your voice (be it in the circle of our mutual friends, or in your poems), I felt a great calm; and yet with it the incompleteness of my life, the in-

significance of my grasp of things. You stirred up within me longings for work of a noble kind, as a landscape affects me. How I revered the purity of your aims, your uncompromising attitude, your persistency! . . . .

"Yes, yes! your are my man-god! my idol! What if so? You cannot be angry with me. You will not! It has been some years since I rejected the god of my fathers; and it is so awfully depressing to live without a god.

"A woman's nature craves affection. What use had I for your respectful attitude towards me? Although you did not wish to wound me deliberately, every time you spoke it was almost an offense to see how you measured your words. . . . .

"And now you are gone; your friends tell me, for long. . . .

"After all, what do you worship outside your own dreams? Life itself is secondary! . . . .

"But this expression of anger is only an expression of despair. . . . .

"Noble teacher, dare you accept the realities of life? . . . ."

"How shall I steer between Scylla and Charybdis? Shall I answer?" was the thought that most disturbed Raman as he folded the pages. "I feel like a fool. A thousand pities! Perhaps it was this sort of thing that drove that woman to Bronski. Come! To work! To work! I would have done better had I stayed in."

Rain was beginning to fall in a thin haze. The poet stared out, unable to begin any task.

"What little laughter, all told, there is in the world!" And then he wondered, "What will a hundred years of culture do with the Jew? Can the Oriental be eliminated? It was made worse by the blending with the Slav. . . . When the spirit of unrest mounts spirited

steeds, it means either the mountain height, or the abyss. . . . . Poor Hindman! He seems helpless. It is a matter of indifference to him what to accept and what to reject. And his work is of no interest to him. Buried alive! Buried alive!"

After his thoughts had taken another direction they brought the exclamation, "An odd wish to get into costume to interpret a rôle! There, of course, the applause is direct. What can their home life be like?"

He took up pencil and paper, and began to work.

CHAPTER V

ON payment of a fee the shawls which protected the carefully made coiffure of the women, and the top coats that covered the holiday clothes of the men were stowed away for safe-keeping, and the strings of couples who had entered the "hall" where the dance of the "Radicals" was to be given ascended a long flight of stairs into a large, brilliantly-lighted room. At one end, a stage was rendered attractive by potted plants; and flanking the walls of the room were long tables on which stood sugarbowls, glasses for tea, and platters with sliced lemons.

The murmur of voices grew in volume as the place filled. Ushers, whose usefulness could not be readily ascertained, ran back and forth among the numerous groups. Handsomely gowned girls were using their eyes effectively on young men; and the latter, conscious that their white vests, high collars, and shiny, plastered hair gave them an air of dignity, behaved gallantly.

Those whose education and profession allowed them to be classed as "Intellectuals" promenaded through the throng, speaking Russian, and bowing in stately fashion to chance acquaintances.

Evening clothes were rare enough to be conspicuous; but the few who wore them were not entirely at ease in the Bohemian gathering.

Mrs. Bronski arrived, gowned in black, with a string of pearls about her neck, and a red rose in her hair. Robinson was her escort.

At once she became the centre of a circle of friends both gay and serious. Grave individuals would laboriously uncover a jest; insignificant persons thrust themselves upon her with questions that did not seem to try her patience; and close friends occasionally risked a compliment; but they appeared to be on equal footing in her esteem.

Some one informed her, "We expect Jennie Dantzig."

"That woman!" she at once cried. "What do the police intend to do about it? They may stop the dance."

"Oh, no. They'll shut their eyes to her, and open them on a few extra glasses of beer."

"An unexpected entertainer, surely!" Mrs. Bronski said with a grimace. "The word 'radical' covers a multitude of—"

"Virtues," finished Robinson, "Don't forget we are here. As for Dantzig, she will not 'swipe' any of your laurels."

"She will recite her own lines," came from an unexpected quarter. Dr. Ratner's ruddy countenance was grinning out of a collar that surrounded his short neck to the ears.

"Doc, you must have done away with a worthy member of society to look so solemn." Red-cheeked Magil had turned from shaking the single finger extended him by Mrs. Bronski. "How do you dare risk it among these fiery thinkers?"

"Oh, I'm an apostle of freedom."

"A golden-tongued apostle," came caustically from a round-shouldered, flat-chested, bright-eyed young man. The remark had reference to Ratner's connection with the Goldmans, a part of whose establishment had been his dowry.

He allowed the observation, and others of a similar nature, to pass over him without any show of resentment.

Robinson exclaimed :

"The circumference of waist is Ratner's ; but that most original thought is Hindman's. How ready we are to supply quotation marks when we know the individual ! "

"I wonder "—Mrs. Bronski had to lift her voice to be heard above the din—"if Dr. Hindman will be here ? "

"Dr. Ratner is. Why not Hindman ? " came from the young man with the bright eyes and the round shoulders.

"Oh, in his case," said Robinson, "he happens to be really fond of radical enthusiasm. I suppose that between a circus and a show of this sort, his preference would go out to his former friends. He places great stress on the traces we show of our animal descent, you know."

His exasperating smile was too much for the assailant of both doctors, and the young man murmured something about "animal conservatism," but was ignored.

"If Hindman comes, then Raman will too," announced Dr. Ratner.

"Raman ! " cried several. "Is he in Philadelphia ? "

"Didn't you know it ? He spent an evening with the Goldmans in whose house the Philosophical Club met him." And Ratner enjoyed the triumph he had bought at the Goldmans' expense.

"They say," began the fiery young man, "that he is developing a fine sense of humor. He really needs that to create great literature."

Which tended merely to precipitate a discussion on art.

The hall had by this time taken on the gayest of ap-

pearances ; and the uproar was so deafening that the older people, finding quiet conversation impossible, had to lift their voices to the pitch of the younger folks, and finally gave up in despair.

Sudden stillness followed the appearance on the platform of a tall, gaunt, shrill-voiced individual who announced in doubtful English the first number on the programme. A Chopin Prelude was rendered by a tiny woman of uncertain years. She was prompt to respond to the uproarious request for an encore.

Then a violinist essayed numbers with thrilling sadness that delighted tender-souled women.

Hindman and the poet were among the late arrivals. They quickly slipped into rear seats.

Applause died away with the final disappearance of the violinist, to be renewed as Katherine Bronski slowly came on the stage and bowed.

Impassioned revolt-lines from Shelley made up the recitation, reënforced by appropriate gestures, and modulations of the musical voice.

"It was good!" breathed Hindman when she had finished. The applause shook the hall.

"Yes." Then Raman gathered himself together, and as an after-thought said, "But beyond the sound of the lines she seemed to get little out of it."

"Of course she missed its depth. It could not be otherwise. Still, the very roll of those lines was somewhat stirring."

"It made me think of sun breaking through clouds."

Both men had found the woman exceedingly attractive in the glitter of lights, with the black dress against the white skin, and the dark hair shading the pale brow.

She refused to recite again, despite the persistency of the applause.

Other numbers followed; but the patience of the audience suddenly vanished; and the few who were desirous of following the programme had to crowd up to the platform.

As if at a signal, the seven hundred people in attendance got to their feet with a roar that rocked the walls. The concert was over. To add to the din, the folding chairs were flattened, and flung to the floor.

Many began to gather about the long tables on which tea was served; and the elders composed themselves for lengthy chats. The "Americanized" element sought the refreshment tables and bar belowstairs.

Although ostensibly a gathering of the radicals of the individualist type, the assemblage in the main was made up of persons who held no decided opinion upon any topic of world-wide interest. They dubbed the leaders of the affair 'freaks', and danced gayly through the evening as if to disprove the contention that they could not make what they pleased of their lives.

Raman, absently watching the animated scene before him from over a glass of tea, found himself near Miss Rovno whom he had no difficulty in remembering when her great, black eyes were turned upon him. He put out his hand, and after the first few words, spoke of the readiness of the younger people to leave the issues of life downstairs with their coats and shawls; until he remembered that she was but a slip of a girl herself.

As she glanced from his smiling face to the many who were forming in line for the opening march, she said:

"Ah, but are they not fortunate? It is much to forget. How happy they look! To come upon a gay mood when one seeks it! Yet when I see this, I cannot help thinking of the many young people in Russia who go to exile or death for freedom grandly! quietly!—"

The dark eyes filled with tears.

"It has cost you near ones?" he asked.

"So many! They disappeared often without leaving a clue of their whereabouts. One day among us; the next gone—forever. Ah, it is so hard! so hard!"

"Let us be thankful for having known such brave souls," he said warmly. To turn the conversation away from the heart-rending subject he asked, "What do you make of America?"

"I am afraid you will think I am hard to please. But somehow there seems to be no sunshine here. I look back on the green fields, and our little home, and the blue sky—that was always blue,—and find that I feel stifled. And then comes the fear that I am forgetting all my old friends. One ought never to get very far away from the things in which one is interested. Is it not so?"

"Yes," he admitted. "But you are not forgetting about them, or you would not be speaking so. You can be trusted. And by all means keep up your spirits. There is need of sunshine here. Have you not found that heavy burdens are everywhere on tired backs? About you are earnest men and women. Their expression may not be as intense as that of your friends at home. But they are not the less heroes."

Hindman, who had been buttonholed by an amateur attorney-at-law, and had been shown how with skill a certain criminal could have been "saved," made the legal light color by the abrupt way in which he turned to Raman and asked, "Done with your tea? Shall we take a little stroll?"

As the two men edged around the strings of couples awaiting the signal for the march, the poet remarked:

"I have not seen any of the students we met at the Goldmans."

"They are lined up with the purses."

"All! Impossible!"

"Well, not all. There are several of them who have really discovered why their heads were given them. Remember in what a conservative atmosphere education is handed out in this country."

Katherine Bronski waved a spoon merrily at them, and they turned in her direction. After the many whom he did not know had been presented to him, Raman took the opportunity to inform Mrs. Bronski that he had arrived in time to hear the lines from Shelley. His words of praise brought the color to her cheeks.

A crash of music, and the march was on.

The blare of instruments was magical in effect upon the many about the tables which some of the elder people deserted to gain the moving line, while others climbed chairs and applauded. The line itself was beginning curious evolutions that required the watchful eye of several supposed masters of the art of dancing lest it become hopelessly entangled.

Those within ear-shot of Raman were favored with his last poem, recited for the benefit of the few who had not seen it in print. When he had finished, Mrs. Bronski took the rose from her hair and handed it to him. He thanked her with mock gravity that became the spirit in which it was tendered; and then presented it to Hindman with the words:

"Surely he deserves it, for he has passed no comments despite his impatience with poor poetry."

The doctor, much embarrassed, could only say "I am in a forgiving mood to-night."

Under the influence of the music the conversation

languished, or occupied itself with trifles. Mrs. Bronski was silent for a long time; then suddenly bent forward, and said to the poet in low quivering tones:

"Do you realize how happy these young people are? Do you notice how they throw their hearts into the gayety of it all?"

"The spirit of youth," he smiled, "that denies completely, or accepts completely. The older people in their foolishness are saying, 'To-morrow.' These simpler hearts, 'Now!'"

"The trouble with our race," came with a sigh, "is that they give too much heed to that to-morrow. You will agree with me, I am sure."

"Perhaps they expect it to be a little better than to-day. It speaks well for their hopefulness." His glance fell upon Miss Rovno studying the crowd, and he touched on her loneliness.

"So she has confided in the poet! But, my friend, one does not have to travel five thousand miles to feel lonely. I remember in one of your poems you speak of bridging the abyss by friendship. But are we not more like driftwood in a great ocean?"

He disputed the statement; and she watched the emotion-lit face whose soft eyes changed with every turn of the thought. She tried to realize what the years of poverty had brought him; and yet disliked his extreme simplicity that served to some extent as a check for the worshipping attitude in others. She noted how at times he seemed to ponder his words as if measuring their value; and how at other times some simple idea would awaken his astonishment as if startling vistas had been opened to his vision. And then her thoughts turned stealthily upon herself; and she came out of sudden gloom to say:

"Many of the women here cry lustily their ambition for equality in every sense."

"There is no need of clamor to get what we are strong enough to take," Raman replied with a smile.

"Are you jesting?" she asked with a seriousness that brought in return:

"You surely realize that a will that knows itself leaves high and low silent."

"Hello! Here is a poetical rendering of metaphysics!" cried Hindman, turning to them. "You wouldn't allow, I suppose, that will in the sense that you used it is merely the consciousness of the ability to overawe."

They were coaxed out of an argument by Katherine who, suddenly grown playful, thrust all sorts of edibles at them.

Magil seized her hands, and cried, "Come, do dance! You know you promised to give my untutored feet a hearing."

"Boy, what means this unseemly disrespect for age?" she said dramatically.

"I promise to reverence the toes. Do come!"

They went to the floor and glided away, Magil's countenance wreathed in smiles, his partner whispering dance-advice as she leaned against him. Hindman's eyes had laughter in them when he turned to the poet; but the latter's face was a mask.

At this moment David Bronski, buttoned into his overcoat, and hat in hand, came sliding against the chairs lined up along the tables, carefully keeping out of the way of the dancers. He paused when he reached the two men.

"Have a glass of tea," said Hindman.

Bronski turned from shaking hands with the poet to say, "No, thank you. I am very tired, and must get

away. I am looking for—Ah! There she is!" And he nodded his head vigorously at his wife to continue dancing when she made a motion to stop.

"Been busy?" Hindman asked.

"A little; mostly small sales, though."

He dropped into the chair vacated by his wife, and chatted to Raman, whose tone was gentle and caressing, although the grey, worn face forced him to avert his eyes.

With a resounding thump of the drum the orchestra finished the dance. Katherine, flushed and perspiring, ran towards the place where her husband sat, and tumbled into a chair, laughing as she fanned herself.

"Why don't you take your overcoat off and stay awhile?" she urged. "It is early."

"I am very tired, dear," he said with a shade of reproach in his voice.

"But you needn't dance. Have a glass of tea, and get rested. Another half hour, and I will go home."

"I'm more than tired: sleepy," he sighed. "Of course, if it's only a half hour—"

Robinson came up, and after shaking hands with Mr. Bronski, asked Katherine for the next dance.

She laughingly granted it; and sailed away on his arm to make up the eight of a quadrille.

"If I got so little in return for my effort as the conductors of this enterprise," said Bronski, "I would not undertake it."

"Come, don't forget how many people give a whole life of work for chance praise," Hindman laughed.

"The words of praise, you forget, mean that someone has been made happy," objected Raman.

"It is true!" Bronski muttered. "It is true! Happiness! Yes, we must have it; else what is the use

of all the up-hill work? See "—with a sweep of the hand towards the dancers—"how happy they are!"

Hindman barely saved himself from a growl of, "Happiness of the flesh!" mindful of Katherine's presence on the floor.

A pretty, tall, golden-haired girl, with rosy cheeks and crimson lips was laughing melodiously near them at some jest of a white-faced male companion. Not knowing the three men who were idly watching the maneuvers of the couples she audaciously smiled at them. Raman and Bronski returned the smile in restrained fashion. The doctor's eyes swept the well-formed body with a glance that turned the girl's face in an opposite direction.

"Aren't you people dancing?" came from a short-haired, little woman of middle age who paused in her way past them.

"We are just waiting to quarrel over you for a partner," Bronski laughed. "How much do you expect to fleece these people out of?"

"Five hundred dollars. And may they never be fleeced for a worse cause!"

"That's not a bad sum," said Bronski; "indeed not a bad sum! I congratulate you."

The woman turned to Hindman who had ignored her.

"It was kind of you to neglect your patients for our sake." The irony in her tone did not disturb him.

"My patients make it a point to stay well while you are getting money for the cause."

After a brief pause, the woman turned hesitatingly to Raman who had also ignored her, and said:

"Why is it your poems lack the revolutionary note these days?"

Hindman, catching the look of embarrassment on his friend's face, interposed:

"You'll be accusing Mr. Bronski next that his drugs are not as good as they were."

"Oh, he's the only one of the three who is seriously given to money-making." And the woman beat a retreat from the unsympathetic atmosphere.

"Don't you know her?" the doctor asked Raman.

"Oh, yes!"

"You can't mean to say that you dare openly show your dislike!"

"Let me give you my reasons. She once got up in a mass-meeting in New York and said I was being paid by the conservative press to tone down my views. But, as you see, she still has hopes for my salvation, for she continues to seek the revolutionary note."

"In her love of humanity," said Bronski, "she cannot find a dozen kind words for three—no, two—sinners. Fortunately, she thinks I am useful since I always buy a ticket for the affair."

Hindman shrugged his shoulders.

"As for you," he said to the poet, "it happens to be your business to forgive people like that. You ought to have offered some soothing explanation."

"I was afraid she would try to explain her good intentions at that meeting. Still, she is honest. She happened to be misinformed at the time. The sort of woman to man a barricade if such an evil day befall us."

They grew silent under the spell of the music that swung the many groups back and forth rythmically on the polished floor. Cries of advice were heard on all sides as the quadrille went on. Mistakes brought impatient laughter from those whose experience had cost them many evenings, and they were as loud in their shouts of dissatisfaction at the conclusion of the number as

the beginners who were now almost certain of the correct figures of the dance.

Katherine Bronski returned in the gayest of moods.

"Dance music doth make children of us all!" she cried.

"Let's be wise, and go home," coaxed her husband.

"Very well."

She arose; but reseated herself promptly at Hindman's reminder of the risk she ran in exposing herself to the cold air while overheated.

At parting, the Bronskis pressed upon Raman to call. It forced him to apologize for his neglect of them.

"I have promised to spend an evening with the Nasts the day after to-morrow," he made mention. "Mrs. Nast wrote me a flattering letter in wonderful Russian. She expects you there. I do not know them."

"Our best friends," said Bronski warmly. "We are sure to be there. So we will have quite an evening together."

"You will find them delightful people," Katherine added.

When the two men were alone, Hindman asked:

"I wonder whether he has gotten much in return for *his* efforts?"

"Have pity," Raman pleaded.

"Let us have it for ourselves, and go."

As they reached the bottom of the stairs, they were hailed by a voice from the refreshment room. A curly-haired, little fellow rushed out to invite them to join him in a bottle of wine. He pleaded so earnestly that they were forced to yield.

"A bottle of wine here!" he roared, rapping on a table that was far enough removed from the crowd to allow him Raman and the doctor to himself.

The bottle quickly appeared, and he filled the glasses while chattering away. Hindman managed to get in:

"Well, what camp boasts of you now? Have you made up your mind?"

"It was always made up. I am an idealist. So I help the individualists, the collectivists, the co-operative organizations, the trades-unions, and the educational societies. I go to all the lectures, read all the sides, and find that they all say wonderful things. There is a whole lot of truth in what they all preach. So I drink to Idealism. May it survive when every other 'ism fails! That should appeal to you, Mr. Raman."

"Excuse me, I am going to drink, but not to that." And having emptied his glass, the poet said, "I have no respect for the social philosophy which makes its coat out of every 'ism.' True it is attractive because of its many colors. But for the ordinary mortal it is altogether too fantastic. Seems like a patching, in fact. You will excuse us, will you not? It is late, and I am very tired."

"Certainly! Certainly!"

They left the idealist quarreling with several who had been more attracted by the resources of his bottle than of his logic.

The two men found the street unusually quiet after the uproar in the hall. Dance music floated out upon the night-air, and laughter, and subdued shouts. But it was all foreign to the stillness that hung over the city. Overhead the few stars that glistened in the smoke-touched air promised a clear day for the morrow.

"Katherine Bronski," began Hindman, "also calls herself an idealist, for the very opposite reason: because she rejects all other 'isms.' Some people call the effects of

emotions 'thinking.' For the first time you forgot your customary courtesy."

"When?"

"When you refused to stay with that last idealist to prove that eclecticism might suit an aristocrat, but not a ten-dollar a week cigar-maker."

Raman spoke of the thoughts induced by a slumbering city.

"Spectres help your work, I suppose," Hindman said with a smile.

"Not the spectres of our forefathers. But you must know that in certain moods we bring the world to us like a confiding child. Have you not stared out upon New York and trembled?"

"A man who possesses so little of worldly goods as you?"

The doctor smiled at the silence which followed. He asked:

"You intend to make it until summer?"

"Eh? Oh! Why,—yes. You are not sorry?"

"How can I be? Wishing you well, I cannot help but look upon you as a possible patient."

"I promise to disappoint your expectations."

Their banter did not bridge a gulf.

CHAPTER VI

"WELL, I am ready now," said Hindman, slipping on his cuffs as he stood in the doorway between his waiting- and examining-room after dismissing a patient. "You wear a tired look for a man who has a long evening before him."

"The result of a day's work. I did not know I was worn out until the last page was finished." And Raman got to his feet with a yawn.

"Well, I can reassure you: we are going to a place where you will suffer no mental strain. That is, they will let you off if you will be tactful enough to nod your head every once in a while. I'm not in favor with Mrs. Nast because I dare disagree with her without seeming to be sorry about it. And, again, I am not spiritual enough. The music may startle you a little." He hid a smile by glancing at his watch. "We will be somewhat early."

Raman had wandered over to the bookcase, and was studying the backs of the many volumes.

"You must be quite an authority on biological evolution," he said at last. "That might certainly make up one's life-work."

"I am satisfied to be an authority in a small way. It was my task to pry all the ambitious societies about here loose from their biblical moorings. One man who accidentally happened to keep awake during one of my lectures told me that it was a crime to teach such heartless subjects. Perhaps the fault was mine."

"Very possible," came bluntly.

"Well, you know they make much of what is called Darwinistic Pessimism."

"The near-sighted must simply find their subject retreating a little, and grow frightened."

"But when it finally filters down through the masses, will they not become mere Hedonists?"

"Mere?"

"Oh, all do not take their pleasures as you do. I think the superior class does not realize how research is cutting into everything holy. When it is shown that nothing is stable, that institutions are fleeting, that in the struggle of classes for power numbers begin to count, that restlessness is no longer expressed vaguely; why, the white, perfumed body will find itself in a cold sweat."

"Bravo!" cried Raman. "That sounded like your old self!"

"Oh, it was only habit; like the man who wriggles his feet in his sleep when he works a sewing machine in the day-time."

Raman laughed heartily at the comparison. He pulled the bookcase door open.

"You have most of the big poets here, I see," were his next words.

"Look out for the dust. I do not use them now."

The copies were well worn. In a few moments Raman had forgotten the other man in his journey through rich lines of verse; and the doctor was forced to say:

"We had better go now, or you will not want to stir at all in a little while. It is a relief, eh, to see how things look when there isn't a suggestion of hard work about them?"

With a sigh the poet returned Heine to its place in the row, then laughingly confided, "I turn to our Jewish friend here when I want to reward myself for a day's

industry. He should have been born in some other period than the one in which he lived, though."

The remark furnished them material for dispute during their entire walk.

The house before which Hindman halted announced from both the ledges of the lower windows Dr. Nast's profession; and a glass case contained a display of artificial teeth. All blinds were drawn as if to shut out completely the external world.

With the ring of the bell the two men found themselves flooded with light as the door abruptly swung open; and when they disposed of their hats and overcoats on the rack, they were conscious of a sudden stilling of voices in the front room. Hindman's comments upon the awing power of the poet's presence were cut short by the appearance of a little woman of considerable girth who greeted them in Russian. The dentist, also small,—though wanting the proportions of his wife,—came forward before they reached the parlor, and shook hands warmly.

In the parlor they found a handsome, soft-voiced, bearded young man who went by the name of Beranov, and was introduced to them as a "critic of music;" a tall, broad-faced, flaxen-haired fellow named Fustnitz, who seized Raman's hand with crushing force, and was "profoundly happy to know him;" three silent, shy women huddled in a corner; and Robinson, carefully attired.

There was another ring of the bell, and Mrs. Bronski entered with Magil who brought laughter into the solemn house. He slapped Dr. Nast on the shoulder, cracked a joke at Robinson's expense, grinned at the three ladies in the corner, asked Raman whether he was getting accustomed to the pace of Philadelphia's life, inquired of

Dr. Hindman how he and the undertakers were "making it," and was not at all afraid of Mrs. Nast who was at a loss to manage him. She turned her attention to the poet.

"I am so sorry," she began, pulling her chair close to him, and studying his face, "that I do not read Yiddish. Your work must be very profound, for they all cannot tell me enough about it." The Russian she spoke was flawless and stately. "You write only in Yiddish?" Her tone edged on depreciation.

"Only in Yiddish," he said, smiling a little.

"But of course you strive for high art; you make it say fine, noble things that reach the hearts of your readers."

"As much as lies in my power."

"That is right." Her manner of address might have served her with Magil. "No doubt your ambition is to write in English."

"After some years of study of the language I may be bold enough to undertake some work in it."

"Ah, I see you are conscious of the difficulties. It is too idiomatic. Still, it is a pleasant language; although I never cared to accustom myself to it, since here we rarely speak anything else than Russian. Perhaps we are not good Americans." Her smile warned him that she was jesting.

"Russian well spoken is a virtue anywhere," he said, much to her delight.

"You care for music?" was her next question.

"Very much."

"Naturally: a poet. The two arts are intertwined. I suppose you have heard them call architecture frozen music. Well, poetry is music just thawing. Do you not think it is a good definition?"

He laughingly refused to concede anything short of first place to his art.

"I know: you are sensitive about your work. I do not blame you. When I hear a good poem, I say, 'Can anything be grander?' When I play Chopin or Schumann I say the same thing. We are many sided. Ah, how romantic life can be among the arts!"

She stared dreamily before her. Hindman, who had been in conversation with Dr. Nast, looked over in her direction, and blew his nose loudly. The action aroused Magil to a remonstrance.

"If we are to have music, let it be the real stuff," he cried.

"Yes," said Mrs. Nast to Raman, "we shall have both music and poetry; which is possible only in song. Mr. Robinson has an excellent voice, excellent and very sweet. His is an emotional nature."

Mr. Robinson was being urged to sing.

"I am not in good voice to-day," he pleaded.

"That's what you always say. Yet do we ever complain?" said Magil.

"Complain!" came indignantly from Mrs. Nast. "Why do you use such a word?"

"It is very good of you," murmured Robinson, and looked expectantly in her direction.

At once she got to her feet, and went to the piano, where she assumed a very correct position. The introduction to the song which Robinson had selected was played slowly and with careful pedaling. When his turn came, he acquitted himself to the satisfaction of all. Raman told him, "You have an excellent voice. I must certainly praise the way you use it;" and his interest in the light-hearted man was heightened. Even Hindman had not been chary of his applause. Mrs. Nast cried:

"What an artist the world has lost in you, Mr. Robinson!"

"Sh!" warned Magil. "Don't say anything to the world."

Mrs. Nast turned frowningly upon him.

"You lack completely the art instinct," she scolded.

"Haven't I been very patient?" he argued.

"He is a terror," murmured Dr. Nast. His smile was crushed by a disapproving glance from his wife.

"And now, what of yourself, Mrs. Nast?" cried Robinson.

"Yes, don't forget yourself," Hindman urged. The poet suspected his serious mien, and nervously awaited the outcome.

"Fortunately," said Katherine Bronski, "Mrs. Nast is true artiste enough not to have to be coaxed."

"I didn't see you do double stunts at the ball the other night," growled Magil.

"There is all the difference, my cheerful numskull, between a circle of friends and a gathering of the curious," she replied.

"I stand corrected. Let us have the music, Mrs. Nast."

That lady, striking a chord, began in great shrieks a lament that was very weird and full of possibilities for a feeling interpreter.

Hindman studied his shoes, Raman a point high in the wall, Robinson the ceiling. Young Magil was rubbing his chin; and Mr. Beranov, the musical critic, shifted uneasily in his seat.

When silence was at last vouchsafed the auditors, Fustnitz of the flaxen hair cried:

"What grief! That composer has suffered the torments of hell."

"Ah," said Mrs. Nast, wiping her eyes, "it was grief! Have you ever heard anything so full of tears? Too sad! It unnerves me. We Russians feel altogether too much."

"Altogether too much," Hindman echoed. "But of course we are not Russians."

"And now," Magil in a lucky moment interposed, "let us have the duet. Robinson do your duty. Come now!"

"Oh, let it go for another time," Robinson said brusquely, aware that the young man was mischief-bent.

Mrs. Nast sat calm and unapproachable, waiting for a general request.

The three ladies who had been as the dead raised their voices.

"Come, you must sacrifice your non-desire for the pleasure of the company, Mr. Robinson," the hostess herself suddenly scolded.

So they sang the duet, the voices blending in most curious fashion, and shaking the room. When it was finished, Mrs. Nast sighed. Others did the same.

"It is just so," the hostess held forth: "We must put life aside and give ourselves to poetry and music. They are the salvation of existence. Otherwise how unromantic the days are! And we steal to our music, and to poetry,"—a concession to the guest of the evening—"and there is no day."

The romantically-inclined cried, "True! True!"

"Yes," said Fustnitz; "but we must accept also the realities of life so that *they* may become poetical facts."

"Suppose we go into the dining-room and have something," the husband of Mrs. Nast suggested.

Several risked the displeasure of the hostess by laughing outright; but since among these were close friends

who could not have meant ill, she made an effort to discover the humor in the exchange of words. Failing, she decided that Magil had been at his tricks.

As they were drifting out of the parlor they were joined by a man who had just been admitted to the house. He was introduced as Mr. Neshon. One of his shoulders was higher than the other; the pear-shaped head with its bristling hair sat low on his shoulders; and the lips protruded unnaturally between mustache and beard.

"Your poems," he said to Raman, "are the expression of the longing of those submerged men. And of course your lines are more than this, since it is through you that the dreams are expressed. And I think very highly of your feuilletons. They are awakeners."

He proved to be a supporter of the radical Yiddish newspaper in which the poet was interested; and at once they were deep in discussion of its methods and of its future, until Mrs. Nast, indignant that the man whom she had placed at the head of her table should be forced into dry-as-dust topics, led the conversation into other channels.

"Mr. Raman, do you deal with the 'Grand Passion'?" she began.

The question was not without its embarrassment for the poet. He answered gravely:

"We see so much of mating, that it is nothing if not the proper thing to glorify it."

"Ah, yes. But surely you cannot mean the prosaic mating of our times! I am positive that with but few exceptions the grand passion survives only among the simpler people where it is beautiful since it is only for its own sake."—("Heavens! Is that woman mad? To deal with such a subject here!" Raman inwardly protested, wondering what Katherine Bronski's thoughts

might be.)—" How magnificent is Carmen in her affection! This is ideal love! No guessing what it will lead to. No weighing or considering. Just passion, pure passion, speaking right out. It is the cause of immortal art. He who has loved well has enriched the world."

And in the silence which had fallen upon all about that table, Mrs. Nast dwelt at some length on the great *amours* that had come down through history and tradition. Her memory was excellent; and as she gazed enthusiastically through her glasses, now at one person, now at another, names and dates flowed without a break.

Raman wondered why young Magil was studiously avoiding the opportunity for a sally although grinning complacently. He turned to Hindman. The doctor was sipping his tea with a grave air.

Several times Mrs. Nast sought to arouse the poet's enthusiasm; but he pleaded a poor memory.

At last Hindman plunged into a presentation of the biologist's attitude towards the question, dealing with it in merciless detail. And having made a beginning, he swept Mrs. Nast out of the way, not allowing her a word, and shocked everyone by his naked exposition of the subject.

Much to their relief, chance mention of history's view of the origin of the family allowed Mr. Neshon—a lawyer conversant with many branches of learning—to enter the lists in protest of what he called "a gross misstatement of facts."

Conversation was resumed about the table while he and the doctor wrestled with each other. Hindman's "How can you make such assertions?" and the lawyer's oft-repeated "What do you mean?" which rose like a shriek, soon ceased to disturb the others; except that once

Katherine Bronski remarked ironically, " We are foolish not to listen." Which brought from Hindman, who had lost his temper in handling insufficient data, " It is truth we are after. We leave the good and beautiful to you."

Mrs. Nast had concluded that the poet was an excellent conversationalist, since he did not differ with her emotional interpretation of life. She found him listening as attentively to her discourses on Russian literature, German music, and Italian art ; and unburdened herself at great length of all she had learnt, blind to the weariness which he could not entirely conceal.

Katherine, under the influence of the languor which had stolen upon her, was dreamily absorbed in her own thoughts. She wondered in her lassitude why she should saddle herself with cares when she could make them vanish at will, when she could find comfort in friendship, in books, in an existence that did not entail material hardship. Raman would say that soul-weariness was cowardice.

Her eyes travelled to his face, and she remarked how tired he was.

Suddenly he looked at her and smiled. Instead of meeting his glance with composure, the muscles of her face became rigid. It lasted but a brief moment, yet it sufficed to fill her with dismay. And as she recovered herself, she was furious. The blood swept over her body ; and her heart throbbed painfully.

She hastily got to her feet.

" What is the matter ? " asked Hindman as he caught sight of the pale face.

" Nothing. I was feeling faint. It is close here."

" Don't get your death-cold," warned Mrs. Nast as Katherine made her way to a window. The young woman reseated herself promptly, and tried to laugh.

Raman was stunned by the apparently meaningless incident. He did not seek to fathom its cause; but assumed a careless air lest the unnerved woman opposite him read his thoughts.

Mrs. Nast was holding forth on the work of preparation for the Russian revolt, and was all aglow with praise of the men behind it.

"Here they do not understand such things," she said. "To the average American it looks very wild to give up one's life for liberty. They are not in the mood for such sacrifices. Ah, what sacrifices!" Her voice fell sorrowfully.

"Of course," said Hindman, "you have seen their new representative. He was in my office the day before yesterday. They are badly in need of money just now."

"When they send their representative I give liberally," replied the hostess in a voice that rang faintly false.

"Well, when I see him again I will send him," the doctor hastened to assure her.

"Of course. I shall be glad to meet him."

Dr. Nast thoughtfully pulled on his mustache.

"They are certainly persistent," said Fustnitz.

"How is it that the grand rebels are always in the other country?" asked Neshon bitingly. "You students are not as fortunate as those in Russia; for there they find open opposition to freedom, while here every leader thinks only of how to destroy the conditions which separate classes, which make poverty so rampant, which create the criminal—"

"The student body attends to its own business," Fustnitz hotly interrupted.

"Of course. It is somewhat difficult to keep the

other person's interests in mind," Neshon said contemptuously.

"You are not in prison here for speaking your mind," timidly interposed Dr. Nast.

"My Siberian experience might almost be duplicated if I got on a street corner and suggested that our society was morally bankrupt, so certain are they here that it is not."

Mrs. Nast tried to arouse the poet by saying:

"You do not discuss?"

"If it is to convince the other man against his convictions, it is akin to quarreling; hardly a method," he said, trying to appear interested.

Bronski brought a measure of peace by his entrance. With a cracked "Hullo!" he seated himself near Mrs. Nast who treated him with marked attention, and inquired after his health. His gloomy tone brought a growl from Hindman, who said, "Don't believe him. All he needs is a rest."

"So that is the sort of hope you hold out!" cried Bronski.

"How witty you are!" Mrs. Nast said with a great laugh.

"I have left my cares at the store."

It was almost midnight before they gave any thought to the hour.

Outside, Fustnitz drew a deep breath, and pronounced the night "magnificent."

Beranov, the "critic of music," who had not spoken a dozen words during the whole evening, murmured, "For a cigarette I would agree with you."

Hands touched for a moment at the corner where the Bronskis were to take their car.

"You are a perfect stranger to us," declared Bronski

as he stared at the poet. "Why do you not come to see us?"

"Yes, yes, I will. My work allows me next to no leisure. I am an intensely selfish individual, believe me."

"We shall certainly believe you if you persist in staying away," Katherine Bronski told him quietly.

When Hindman was alone with the poet he remarked:

"A man of letters would not starve here."

"Ah, but they feed the well-fed ones," Raman laughed.

"You didn't hear how I showed Neshon that he knew next to nothing of the subject he was trying to talk about. A shallow man. I suppose you were busy on a poem suggested by Mrs. Nast's dissertation on love."

"She has the right instinct. I felt very much like an amateur, I assure you."

"Confess that the Goldmans are not as amusing, taking it all in all."

"Suppose we dismiss the subject, and try to find something of interest to ourselves."

"Eh?" Hindman looked curiously at his companion. "That would be too serious. Out of mood?"

"No; tired. I am sorry I went."

"So! Coming from you it speaks volumes." After an interval he asked, "Why don't you go to the Bronskis?"

"Eh? Why? I do not know." Then gathering his senses together, Raman said, "I am really fond of isolation. Then there is my work."

"I forgot."

The tone aroused the poet.

"I might ask *you* why you don't go often," he said.

"You can. Shall I tell you?"

There was silence.

As he approached his door, Hindman made mention of Walt Whitman.

"An old flame?" Raman asked.

"I can go to him when every other maker of verse tires me. He gets you on new heights, and brings new country before your eyes. Very few men could put their ten fingers so upon things. Suppose you come in. There is one thing I want to read to you—"

"Not to-night, Hindman. I feel like dozing off right here."

In his office the doctor stood for some time without striking a light. He was trying to piece together the details of the scene when Katherine Bronski had sprung to her feet. Raman's strange silence fixed his attention.

He laughed loudly.

"How do they say?—'From the frying pan—' Ah, my ideal fellow—!"

He laughed again, softly, as his imagination amused itself with possibilities.

CHAPTER VII

THE evening was cold and cheerless when at the end of the following week Raman went down the street in which the Bronskis lived. He was alone; Hindman had been called away from his office to attend a patient. Only after much deliberation had the poet decided that to ignore the Bronskis any longer would leave him without the shadow of an excuse.

It was Katherine who met him at the door.

"A surprise indeed!" she cried. "Are you really fond of doing the unexpected?" When he was in the little front room she pushed a chair towards him, and then hastened to pick up a book which had fallen to the floor. "I suppose you considered that you were making for hostility by your inattention. We are a sensitive people, you know."

Her studied lightness of tone put him entirely at ease.

"There is no possibility of my making many friends in Philadelphia," he laughed; "for they show no inclination to accept my excuses as valid. But no man is so much a slave of his work as myself, really!"

"Who had ever such a master! How often do you bewail your loss of liberty?" She bent serious eyes upon him.

"Every time I discover that I am a social animal."

"Which must be when you leave your work. Ah, how fortunate is he who can turn to and from the world

at will! Do you not find often that much it does is madness?"

"Suppose we call it uninspired madness."

"No! No! That is a concession to Dr. Hindman! Why are you so hard?"

"A concession to the majority of men. Are we not called dreamers?—in the sense that we have burdened our mental stomachs before going into our trance; which is plainly synonymous with childishness."

She laughingly protested against the fancy.

"But one thing is certain," he said: "that while the world can very well get along without me, the reverse is hardly true. Don't try to prove the contrary," he warned, "or I shall believe you are trying to flatter me."

"Well, you shall believe what you please; but I tell you that the world is not likely to risk getting along without you. I think that it is the result of a bargain. You promise mankind to think much of it; and of course it rewards you,—in its own peculiar way."

"Which all makes me feel that this is an age unlike any other."

"Have I really flattered you? Don't dare to object!"

"I will thank you instead."

"Let me tell you that there are many who would thank *you* if they found the chance. And it is so because many, like myself, are expecting friends out of the future; and when one comes, they cry, 'There, that makes life worth while!' Which no one would dare deny."

"Least of all the man who is happy to find all doors open to him. But the producer of art is often an odd individual; and so he finds excuse for himself in the plea that in his continual association with the beautiful the world grows unreal to him. He alone is the loser."

Raman was silent a moment, and then said with a smile, "We always wander into serious subjects. It does not seem to be a hardship, however."

"Perhaps it's our way of being frivolous. They always say that serious people usually find jest a relief. But I am such a poor hand at laughter that at most I would only spoil your evening."

"How many of us ever had two hours of laughter in succession?" he leaned forward to ask. "That is, laughter created by ourselves."

The question startled her.

"Two hours of laughter? You mean, have *I* ever forgotten myself sufficiently for two hours?—"

"Don't answer such an absurd question!" he cried. "I don't know what prompted me to put it."

"Your desire to know me, I suppose," she said softly. "Now, I can imagine *you* laughing for one hour; but not for two. Unless you laugh at us."

"Surely you are not trying to equal my absurdity!" And then he said, "I thought I saw snowflakes when I was coming here. Do you remember the fields in Russia? Nothing could match their autumn browns. And no city dweller here can realize the beauty of stretches of snow lying as far as the eye can reach."

"No, nothing is as dreadful as the gloom of our skies in fall. I am not trying to match your experiences." Her smile was touched with sadness. "But I have no patience with the chill that heralds the passing of summer brightness,—a brightness that, true enough, is deadly to work; but it drugs ambition, so that we are willing to let the days glide without question and without much ado. I cannot even do any serious reading in summer. And so I appreciate what they call 'Summer Fiction.' Ah, the days of sunshine!"

"But the winter months allow you serious books," he said cheerfully, to rid her of her mood which was beginning to react upon him.

"That is true. And then I read even the oft-mentioned, rarely-perused classics; and it is such a delight to think that they were criticisable in their day. You see how I look on authority. I was going over these short stories." She handed him the book. "I wanted to see whether the praise lavished on them was in proportion to the work. They are masterpieces. Shall I read you one?"

"Let me choose what I believe his best. You shall have your turn."

She was uneasy while he fingered the pages; but the story he selected touched no problem; and she scolded herself for expecting that it might.

She read with nervous beauty; and when she had finished, blushed like a school-girl at his nod of satisfaction.

"It must have been hard work to conquer the Russian in your accent," he said.

"Work enough. But I finally managed to drive the Russian out of my English."

And laughing, she reached out for Shakespeare.

"I have come across some nuggets of gold lately in unsuspected places that I want to read to you."

Many of the words merely lingered on his ear as he watched the play of the face-muscles that adjusted themselves to the text. He reflected:

"What a peculiar atmosphere she creates!—when it seems normal to be straining under great burdens. How restless! It would have meant much for her if she had been a mother." He smiled at his guess.

Katherine divined that he had been absorbed in his

own thoughts ; and she left the book to get his impression of men and women she supposed him to know in New York. She was grateful for his fairness in several instances.

"Do you never see the bad qualities?" she asked with a laugh.

"Well, if I do, they are so apparent, that I hasten to seek out the good ones. Think how easy it is to remember the shortcomings!"

"But think how unwise to take no notice of them! It's the only way sometimes we 'can see ourselves as others see us.'"

The talk grew more animated when the customary tea intruded.

"You do not know how happy I am to hear the bell ring," confessed Katherine as they faced each other across the table. "Surely you have fallen upon the time when one book after another is put aside as unsatisfactory, when the hours crawl, and the spirit becomes hopelessly drugged."

"A common experience. There is nothing so destructive to clear-sightedness."

"And is yours the trouble of finding that you write, write, and the effort of getting words to coincide with ideas reaches the point where words mean nothing at all? It is hardly fair, since your style is so smooth."

"By which," he laughed, "you mean that I can carefully conceal the effort it has cost me. But you are too familiar with the process not to have tried your hand at literature."

"Oh, I made quite an extended trial."

"And you stopped? Or are you going to surprise us?"

"I am afraid not. I was a victim of the struggle for style."

"To give in that easily!"

"Well, that was hardly all. You ought to know that a publisher cannot let one in as an understudy. And I —am a poor fighter."

"Confess that you did not really put your heart into the work."

"It may have been that. We can only give ourselves to one thing passionately. Looking back now I can see what the real trouble was with my work."

"Other faults?"

"I believe you are laughing at me."

"Certainly not!" he protested gently.

"Even if you did, I could not very well blame you. My failure was that I treated every subject too emotionally; and so when I tried to square what I had written with fact, I felt that I was a fraud."

Her laugh made him wretched.

"You must have been crueler than any critic could have been," he said.

"Well, I tried to write in cold-blood; and my English began to halt, to drag, to doze, until I was so mortified that I gave up. I acquired some respect for those who had given something to the world. Naturally I drifted to translating. But it was a pity to compete with starved college men who might know Russian."

"There is much good Yiddish fiction," he hastened to say.

"Suppose you give me an opportunity of turning a play you might do in that tongue into English. It would be interesting; and would be a new field for you—"

"You believe me a very idle man," he bantered.

"I do not want to believe you a one-thing-at-a-time man, the like of whom is making this a very dull world."

"But anything else would decrease the value of that one thing. You do not realize what three columns every other day means," he said in an injured tone that made him very human to her.

"Give up the paper! I see you are horrified. Well, write only once a week. You dare not be a drudge."

"You forget that the paper is just building up."

"And that they are using you!"

"You mean that I am exploiting my opportunity."

They started when the street door was closed. David Bronski entered, and on sight of the poet, the delight he felt shone in his worn face.

"I believe it is only your second time, Mr. Raman," he scolded. "You may be sure we have often spoken of your continued absence, since our first evening was so pleasant, and we had promised ourselves many like it. If you are desirous of avoiding people, this is just the place for you; at least it seems so this year. Last winter we had crowds every night. But they must have found a circle of friends a fine thing to have around one's table, and are waiting at their own now." He laughed as he seated himself. "How do you like winter? Does it not disturb you?"

"Very little," replied the visitor.

"The work," said Katherine, "should be bigger than the mood."

"Of course," said Raman. "You don't look out of the window when you are measuring out your drugs, Mr. Bronski."

"A comparison like that!" laughed the head of the house.

"Why not?"

Familiar speech disposed of barriers satisfactorily. Bronski was flattered by the frequency with which the poet yielded to his opinion, and failed to notice that most of the talking was being done by himself. He was soon upon a subject that he was able to deal with enthusiastically.

"You see, we live our lives to a certain extent isolated, but are as happy as the average man can possibly be. Many of our dreams concern the future; which is an incentive to forgetting the annoyances of to-day. I am surprised that you are willing to live your life alone, Mr. Raman. I would not say it if I considered you a self-satisfied man who believes that to take a companion for life is to make unendurable concessions.—"

"Now you are getting on Mrs. Nast's favorite topic!" Katherine cried with an uneasy laugh.

"There! That is an example for you! What an ideal household is that of the Nasts!" Bronski continued, undeterred. "It means a sharing of joys, and a dividing of griefs and of burdens. Look at our friend Dr. Hindman. A good woman would have filled his life with purpose, would have helped him forget his failings, would have turned his ability to account. As it is, he lives a selfish life, without purpose, of no use to himself.—"

"Don't!" pleaded his wife.

The poet said hastily:

"Hindman is a man apart. The woman he would mate with would either be master, or have no rights at all, except those his whims would allow her. Don't try to solve his problem in the way you would any ordinary man's. I can imagine how a young, impressionable girl might be shaken by his bigness.—" He caught an exchange of glances between the Bronskis, and paused.

Mr. Bronski hastened to say, "You know much of the accidents of human nature."

"And the girl—" inquired Raman, frowning.

"Oh, it all ended all right," Bronski said.

"She was a pretty piece of femininity, but absolutely devoid of sense," Mrs. Bronski related. "Her parents, when they got wind of the infatuation, were not at all displeased; in fact they were flattered. But people who knew Hindman spoke to them plainly. It would have been useless to talk to the girl. She is reconciled now. To give Hindman credit, I will say he acted sensibly. Perhaps he wants to live his life as befits a man who has nothing in common with his fellows."

"There was something very interesting that you left out, dear," Bronski said.

"You mean about the girl coming to me?—Oh, don't let us discuss that matter any further. It was a sorry business."

Raman was certain that he could well have been spared the story. It was too painful to have the woman detailing such topics.

The rest of the evening passed more smoothly; and at a late hour Raman bade them good-night. In the privacy of his room he loudly promised himself that he would use every means to avoid that house. The resolution seemed to him of some importance next morning when he found that he could not pick up the threads of his work easily.

On the visitor's departure Bronski had said:

"How open and sincere! You can almost read his thoughts. I love him. I forgot to ask at dinner, dear, what you will get at the Literary Society."

"Ten dollars!" she cried in disgust. "I was right

in refusing to recite for nothing. You should have seen how they haggled over that paltry sum when other talent is being paid liberally. Oh, I am sick of them all! Everything is a question of dollars! dollars! The Jew merely pretends he likes big things. His wisdom is a cheat! He is the biggest poser on earth! Bah!"

"As long as it makes them happy why ask them to be otherwise?"—an argument which Katherine did not attempt to meet. After a great yawn, Bronski said, "Time for bed, dear."

"I will be up in a minute. There are a few pages of a book I want to finish."

"Well, don't drink any more tea. It is hurting you."

She tried to conceal her annoyance when he stood looking down at her dotingly, and almost beat her foot with impatience. At last he left the room, and she sat buried in thought, her hands clasped before her, and her head on her arm.

"The punishment is heavy upon me. Ah, why did I do it? Why did I do it?" she moaned. "Those fearful years! They give me no rest. They brand me! And people are staying away because they see I have little heart for anything."

Trifles came back to add to the pain. She remembered Hindman's glance full of mockery when she had called him a materialist. It no longer counted to strike brave attitudes. Was it not better to let the years drift without this self-torture? She must learn to smile. So would the poet counsel. But could he be fair to her? Why did he hesitate to visit them?

She began to look upon Raman's stay in Philadelphia as an evil. The reflection that followed left her no peace: "Hindman has told him everything, even if he did not ask for the details; and has told all with pleas-

ure, for he does not like me." She fairly writhed as she pictured Raman listening to the story. "No! He must not be asked to call here again! I will be cold, distant! God, what a life! what a life!"

A man's features suddenly intruded.

"My whole life has been absurd. A politician! What did I see in him? A girl's fancy! Ah, it seems so long ago!"

Slowly she got to her feet, and reached out for the tap of the gas jet. The next moment she almost flew up the stairs as a daring thought shot through her brain; and she reached the top trembling like a leaf.

Then she whispered, "No! No! It will never do!"

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. Bronski a week later opened the door for Miss Rovno whom she greeted warmly, though asking herself what the reason for the visit might be.

"This was an idle day," the girl hastened to explain, "and I thought that I could find you at home despite the sunshine outside. I am fortunate."

Katherine decided, "She is concealing something. A poor actor. What can it be? A loan? She would not approach me in this way. But to come here when I am sure she dislikes me!"

She made the girl feel at home. Cosy cushions were inviting in the little sitting room which was unusually attractive after the visitor's own bleak, cold bedroom. But her dislike for the woman opposite her marred her pleasure in the surroundings.

She looked at the book lying face downward on the table, and spoke her regret at having interrupted the reading.

"You are surely more welcome," said Katherine. "And I am sure you will please more. I had decided to stay in and take the bright afternoon from my window."

She studied the pretty face and its lustrous eyes, and wondered what the life of the girl might be; but was too impatient with questions dealing with material wants to pry into it.

Her own girlhood came back to her, with its strange curiosity and odd bewilderment; and she suddenly warmed towards the growing thing that was gazing earnestly at her.

"You allow yourself to feel homesick?" she asked with a smile.

"I try not to be so. Like many other things, I must put that out of my thoughts, else it would only bring me misery."

"You fight, eh?" Katherine cried with heightened interest.

"Would you call it that? I simply try not to remember. I reason that it is a small thing in comparison with other things. And yet I find more and more that it is the small things that give us the most annoyance."

"Yes, at your age."

"Then I shall outgrow it? Still, I can even now turn from these trifles by thinking of what real suffering there is in the world."

"It is well. You will grow strong. There is nothing like being able to master one's self. In the end it is everything."

"You think so? But does it not leave one very tired?"

"Well," said Katherine with a smile, "we have got to forget that also." She was astonished to find what the years had brought to the budding woman. "But you do wrong to worry so early," she warned. "Very soon you will learn its harm. You must find more reason for smiling, and less for these useless frowns. Surely you see that they are really useless! The world very quickly wears out one who beats her head against it. It is a terrible death, too. Don't imagine it is anything else!"

The solicitude was almost motherly; but it seemed that the girl had nothing to confide.

"I realize that I must smile, as you say. But would not Mr. Raman tell us that it is best to know ourselves? We do, sooner or later."

"Yes, sooner or later," repeated Katherine; and the visitor passed out of her view for a few moments. Then she remembered that she was repeating the words of the girl, and looked at her with renewed interest. "Perhaps it is wiser that the knowledge come sooner."

"You see I am right, even with my limited experience," the girl nodded, almost brightly; and then sighed.

"You can go back to your people and find happiness. Why do you not do so?" Katherine asked.

"It would seem as if I had run away from a few trials. When the revolution comes, I shall return. Until then I shall try to adapt myself to things here. As Mr. Raman says, one finds burdens to be lifted from tired backs everywhere. For one thing, I shall join the Socialist movement, since that means lots of work."

Twice had she used Raman's name, and after the second time the woman opposite her was on her guard, although she reflected, "It may be that the girl wants to discuss him with some disinterested person. Let us see." And Katherine said, "You spoke of Mr. Raman. Do you follow his work in the newspapers?"

"Certainly!" cried the girl with enthusiasm. "No one else says such wonderful things. It brightens my life to follow him from line to line. He is both prophet and poet."

"Yes, a wonderful man; so much so that he is a stranger to most of us. He prefers to keep out of the crowd, too."

"And yet he knows us better than we know ourselves," the girl argued.

Katherine put to herself the sad query, "Better than we know ourselves?" Aloud she said, "He may be very human, but I doubt if he understands our sex. That taxes both prophet and poet."

"You think so? I suppose he goes about very little."

"Very little. He came here to get quiet. People have made him tired of admiration and applause. He has been here only twice."

"It would be wrong to ask him to sacrifice his dream-moments for our pleasure," said the girl.

The remark irritated Mrs. Bronski strangely. She said with hauteur:

"A quiet chat rests him. Cannot one be satiated with work?" After a pause she added: "He is a different person when he is light-hearted. Yes, he is very human then."

The girl looked at her with searching eyes. Katherine thought, "Ah, that disturbs you! You thing of a dozen and a half years, are you trying to read me?" And she languidly gazed out of the window, conscious that she was puzzling the visitor.

"His must really be a happy nature, despite all he has borne," said the girl.

"It is for that reason that as a friend he can be a great gift. I knew several approaching this man's worth in New York. But here there are a whole nest of failures who add nothing to the happiness of others."

"You cannot blame them because they wanted much. Is to want nothing best?" the girl asked, much pained.

"The absurd fact is that to be moderate is wisest."

The girl did not speak for a little while as if to heighten the effect of her words, and then said:

"I heard Mr. Raman was married."

It was like a shock to the other woman who grew rigid, and repeated harshly:

"Married!"

"Yes; I believe so."

"Who told you?" Katherine found that she was unable to speak calmly.

"Why, was it not his wife who went mad?

"Oh!" came with poorly suppressed relief: "You mean Paratzin!"

"Was it?" cried the girl innocently.

"Did you not hear that the woman cut the man badly with a knife?"

"Yes, that was it! Paratzin is a poet, you know," came lamely.

"I thought you were wrong. How absurd the idea! I have often heard of Raman; but never was any woman's name coupled with his."

"I don't know how I happened to make the mistake and get them mixed that way," said the visitor with fine indifference. "Poor Paratzin!"

Katherine's smile covered fury.

"You see," she said, "we think that a man of his kind could do no wrong; and to be separated from his wife—!"

She sought some way of giving pain to the girl, and finally cried, "Why not?" So that the talk which had turned from Raman renewed itself about his name; and the woman made much of the amiability he had displayed on his last visit.

"You would think," she said, "that we had been friends for years. It was beautiful." Inwardly she was crying, "You little viper! To have been caught like that!" And she proceeded to add to the distress that revealed itself plainly in the girl's face, although she was

herself far from happy with the indignity of the rôle thrust upon her.

Raman continued to be the topic of conversation for the next hour, Katherine's tongue flying fast, while the girl's silence increased.

Finally Miss Rovno rose to go as the disappearing rays told of a spent afternoon. She shivered a little.

"The room is cold," said Katherine. "I almost forgot it was November. You enjoyed the chat?" Her smile disarmed the girl.

"Very, very much. You were part of the sunshine to-day."

"Come in often. You can find me at home as a rule."

She was composed when she kissed the girl, and laughingly asked pardon for having forgotten the tea.

When alone she stood for a little while leaning against a chair, somewhat abashed. Weariness had destroyed her anger.

"But how could she have expected it to serve her? It will simply increase her pain now. What can she make of the scene? Who could have believed her capable of that trick? At her years I lacked her quickness. Or I should never have attempted such a thing without quaking; and she was as cold as ice."

Miss Rovno, unable to gain any peace, alternated between rage and tears as she took her way home,—a name she applied to a little room that would have been bare but for numerous photographs, and a small shelf filled with books which hung over a small bed.

She sat down without removing her coat, and cried until a measure of strength came back. Then she stared out of the window which looked down upon the Italian quarter

where washlines full of colored clothes were faintly visible in the last of the afterglow, and the herded population filled the streets with hideous old women, dirty youngsters, and lolling men.

She sighed with pity for this people struggling under an alien sky far from that wonderful sunny land, and felt the kinship of exile.

Her own home came back to her, certain to be in the grip of winter; and she saw the long lanes that climbed white hills and fell into the whitest of hollows where snow glistened and crackled; and the blue sky seemed to reëcho loudly the shouts of sleigh-drivers and the call of boys in play; and faces of dear ones loomed clear in the dark room.

She moaned, "I must go to them! I must go to them! There is nothing here!"

And then her thoughts turned to Raman and Mrs. Bronski, and the girl cried, "What a foul thing to throw one's self away on an old man! Their relations must surely disgust the poet. But he will only pity, not seeing that she does not deserve pity. And she is respected!"

Soon impatient anger denied that Raman might be actuated by honest motives in visiting the Bronskis. "Can he be growing weak under the spell cast by the woman? Is he honest in the matter? Is it one thing for him to preach, and another to act?"

Her doubts led her to confess, "I don't know them here. At home they are simpler; they say what they think. Oh, my friends!"

And once more she was the pure-minded girl, eager to meet the world on a basis of kind thought and trust. She went to the photographs and kissed the serious faces,—young faces with old eyes.

At the foot of the stairs she was informed by the lady

who managed the lodging house that a certain physician had called to see her. " He wants you to make massage for a patient," the woman said in English, with educational intent.

The girl answered listlessly.

" You know rent will be due next week," growled the woman, this time in Yiddish. She had little patience with the average lodger who was uniform in delaying payment.

" I have the money," came without resentment; and the girl went out for her evening meal.

CHAPTER IX

"I KEEP track of your musical events if you do not," Raman said as he playfully covered with his hat the book over which Hindman had been dozing.

"What is it? the Orchestra? I am going to sleep; have been up two nights in succession." And the speaker yawned until the tears came.

"Then sleep you must."

"What is the music?"

"I won't tempt you," laughed the poet, taking up his hat.

"Oh, I am not going off to sleep at once. Sit down." And the doctor pushed a chair towards him. "You have some time, unless the soloist is an exceptional one. What is the music?"

"Tschaikowsky's Symphonie Pathétique."

"Yes?" Hindman sat up and consulted his watch. "Who is the soloist?"

"Some young pianist I never heard of."

"Then there won't be a crowd. We can go at the last moment."

"Nonsense! You ought to have your sleep," urged Raman.

"I won't disgrace you by taking it in public. I have dozed off while a Beethoven Symphony was in progress; I ought not to have done it, but that time I had to sleep, and the rhythm did the work." Which was so suggestive of the comfort of a yawn that the doctor entered into its execution with flourishes of the arms and a twisting of

the neck, giving a loud, " Huh ! " as climax. Composing himself he asked, " Well, where have you been ? What have you been doing ? "

" Working, reading, idling : in about equal proportions. Fortunately, the demand for a three column article every other day has allowed me to do the idling without any pangs of conscience."

" Your prose," Hindman pronounced, " is sane enough, although you always manage to discover that the universe was set going to lead up to your theories. A plunge into your poetry is a trial."

" I would really feel bad," replied Raman with a smile, " if I did not know that it is becoming a trial with you to read any poetry. But where do you find the fault in my humble lines ? "

" They seem forced."

" Remember, we have to turn thought partly into music."

" Thought, eh ? " said Hindman with another yawn.

" I never nibble my pen for a subject. Many complain because the lines are overpacked ; honest critics, that is."

" Explained emotions strung together like beads about a child's neck, I would say."

" Don't forget you are very sleepy," laughed Raman.

" Do you know who stopped me to ask where she could get your poems ? " the doctor grinned.

" Not a very discerning person if it's so much of a joke to you. I am curious," said the poet.

" Somewhat of a joke, believe me : Mrs. Goldman. Those that she read she speaks of in the same breath with Goethe's, Heine's, Shakespeare's. When the bourgeoisie take you up, Raman, you will be wearing a silk hat."

"What a delightful moment it will be for my friends!" the poet said quietly. "Perhaps then even my enemies will forgive me."

"Come, don't get bitter. You certainly don't look it."

"I am not. As a friend you are bound to say what should prove of value to me. You will have to let it be its own reward. That requires courage."

Hindman suddenly leaned forward and asked:

"You think I have gained nothing these years?"

"Apparently a new standpoint. We will call it that."

"I don't know whether you are trying to be kind; but a new standpoint it is. Ah, I was full of blind ambition—the sort that uses a man rather than is used by him. I wanted to ride over all obstacles. What was too big for me? Dreams! Why, I was to lead the proletaire in the overthrow of the system! I was to be the hero!—Another Napoleon, but one who would build a new world in which mankind was to be happy. Dreams! Did ever boy do as well?" Hindman laughed. He found the other's face averted. "Well, I saw the necessity of making myself master of thought. I would go to books, and round myself out completely, so that complete confidence would not be lacking. I did go to them. I found that here I could not be master at all; in fact, was more like a child. The pages seemed to laugh at me. New worlds mocked my pigmy efforts. In a rash moment I decided to give myself to medicine. It was absurd, absurd! I was unconsciously throwing up the whole fight. I came to this city, and everything slipped out of my hands. It is true my books got a greater hold on me; but they did not give me courage. I could split hairs; but I could no longer fight. They say I am more of a logician now." He was silent. Then he

laughed to hide his embarrassment at the way he had unbosomed himself.

"I suppose you will acknowledge that you did not go in the right way to your books," said Raman in a low voice.

"Well, you see I accept my task as a physician."

"You do not," came bluntly. "Hindman, go back to New York. There are still the same problems, the same need of leadership, the same need of honest men—"

"And you believe," the doctor interrupted almost sternly, "that here"—striking his breast—"are not problems that demand leadership, honesty?—But let us go—to the music. The walk will bring us in time."

"You think you have turned the tables?" cried the poet, irritated by what seemed a dishonest evasion. "Ah, Hindman, it will never do!"

"Ah, you mean I am bluffing. Perhaps I had to in order to achieve a decent retreat." As he was slipping his overcoat on he said, "We should meet several of our friends there. You can understand what music means to them after our experience at the Nasts. 'We Russians feel altogether too much!'" he mimicked with strange bitterness.

The scene recurred vividly to Raman who could not contain his laughter; and then was so heartily ashamed that he turned away his head.

Hindman hummed as they sauntered up the street, puzzling his companion, who suddenly asked:

"What is your conception of right and wrong?"

"You don't want a display of my knowledge of schools of ethics, I suppose."

Raman waved his hand impatiently.

"All right, then; I'll be honest with you," announced

the doctor. "The system isn't a new one, although it is an improvement on Adam's. I try to get all I can without making myself very disagreeable ; I don't try to obtain what I can't get ; and I am pretty temperate. Extremes annoy me as a rule. Is it a mixture ? "

"You bring everything down to a physical basis."

"A physician's experience don't often swing him into the spiritual."

And Hindman resumed his humming.

They arrived in time to find the seat-holders in the family circle drifting into one of the side doors of the low-browed Academy of Music.

"A poor house," said Hindman after their climb brought them breathless to the tiers of seats. Both men bowed to Katherine Bronski and Robinson who were at a little distance. The doctor looked away from them as he said, "She must be out of mood to come here. Or perhaps Robinson persuaded her."

"Doesn't she really care for music ? " asked the poet.

"Yes, for airs that stick to one like burrs."

It puzzled Raman sorely.

Robinson came over ; and after chatting a little, suggested that the two men slip over the intervening empty seats. The poet assented with alacrity, much to Hindman's amusement.

Trifles bordered the talk between Raman and the woman until the members of the orchestra began to file in. The fame of the organization—the product of a distant musical city—was sufficient to bring a spell of silence. Raman roused himself by saying to Katherine :

"That short fellow with the curly black hair going to the second row of 'seconds' is quite a violinist, but just lacks the tone to carry him into the 'firsts.' A pity : Derbowitz was so eager to fiddle 'first.' It will repay

you to watch him at work with his music-box. Deep-feeling, subtle-nerved, he is a rare soul."

The house was hushed with expectancy as the conductor lifted his arm ; and the first number of the programme was under way. Hindman listened absently to the music that lightly colored his thoughts. He was waiting for the Tchaikowsky Symphony.

To the woman, the figure of Derbowitz rocking back and forth in the roar of melody was fascinating. All the music seemed to pour itself out of that frail wood. Soon she lost sight of the other performers; the flying bow alone was left, with drum taps and trumpet blares in accompaniment.

She thrilled. The themes spoke curious things to her, in a language that gave wild rein to the imagination ; and she leaned forward, her eyes shining, her lips apart, and her brow wet with perspiration.

When silence came, she turned to Raman, who, startled by the display of emotion, wondered at Hindman's ignorance of the woman's inner life.

"Write a poem on that 'second violin,'" she whispered eagerly. "See the possibilities."

"The second violin? Oh! But when we eliminate the desire to moralize, what is left?" Raman asked.

"Bespeak the ambition, the yearning, and the illusion that he is producing the wonderful harmonies. Why preach? Don't you see what I mean?"

The soloist of the evening made his appearance. Scales, arpeggios, and chords crashed and mingled as the hurrying fingers found the keys. Hindman yawned. Katherine sat back listlessly. When it was over she remarked, "I always considered it a cold instrument for concert."

"That is because the artist has as much soul as an accordion," said Robinson.

"A clerk lost to the world," growled Hindman. "There is nothing to him except his hair; and the applause comes mostly from the old ladies."

After an interval Tchaikowsky's Symphony in B minor was begun.

The doctor sat as if in a stupor during the first movement. When the poet turned to him at its conclusion, he found him pale, and halted the thoughts which almost demanded expression. Hindman smiled a little as if amused at the allegro part; but shifted in his seat, much to the poet's annoyance, when the third movement was under way. As the grief of the finale closed in death he cracked the joints of his fingers nervously, and then shrugged his shoulders.

The others found him sulky and silent when he followed them out. He listened to their talk as if they were strangers. And some women who jostled against him on the stairs, shrank away under the look of contempt and hatred he cast at them.

Katherine still urged the writing of the poem she had suggested to Raman, who saw no reason why she should not try it herself. "You are so touched by the thought that you would make much of it," he assured her. "I still only see the moralizing end. You feel something more than that. Let us hear what the doctor has to say."

Hindman cried impatiently:

"What reason can there be for glorifying a mere accompanist? The case is too common; like the case of the moral leader who tells the drudge that patience added to imagination is a virtue. Is there not enough tribute paid to the man who can only do a little, who

can only fiddle 'second'? Bah! The giant-statured alone are worth anything approaching admiration."

"Always?" asked Raman.

"I will admit that in the end—" began the doctor, and paused.

Robinson asked, "Where precisely is the end?"

"How dare you people," cried Mrs. Bronski, "find gloom after such music! Put your shoulders back, and thank Mother Nature that you are alive! See what a beautiful night! Forget, forget everything else, except that you have the capacity for joy!"

"I am glad you stumbled upon the fact," growled the doctor; and he continued to berate the "average" man who had suddenly grown intolerable to him.

Raman came forward in defence. They waxed warm, Hindman proving unusually brilliant, and driving the poet from point to point, until a chance telling stroke disconcerted the doctor, and he surrendered the advantage by crying irritably:

"You are a poet, Raman, not a logician. Why should we argue?"

The poet joined in the laugh.

When Hindman passed his door, he changed his mind about retiring, and went on with them to Bronski's house.

A beer-saloon prompted Robinson to say:

"Such music almost drives me, an average man, to drink. Honestly! And I am not appealing for sympathy."

"Why don't you risk it?" laughed Katherine.

"To display my powers of resistance."

"You haven't got enough courage to give yourself to impulses," snapped Hindman.

"What's the use of having it if we are to accept what you preach?"

"You don't, Mr. Robinson. That also would require courage, I suppose."

"There will be time to sit in sack-cloth and ashes."

Raman here spoke up for his misunderstood friend:

"Yet you readily entered into the spirit of the grief-music, Mr. Robinson."

"No. I merely listened and pitied," was the explanation offered, in a quieter tone than when Hindman had been addressed. "I would have been much more at home had he closed with a major chord. It was almost his duty. You know what I mean."

Katherine here offered:

"Tchaikowsky seemed to speak for all humanity. There is that note of death running through the dreams of the present hour's visionaries; and it may explain why some of the music made me deliriously happy. It ought not to have done so." And she added innocently, "Perhaps I am not Russian enough." Their laughter startled her a little.

"The note of death was barbaric, without the dignity of pride in death," said Robinson. "The Slav has yet to learn to smile bravely."

"It's only when the big men of that race turn moralists that they save themselves from pessimism," Hindman said with contempt.

"Yes," said the poet: "Western and Eastern Europe are at opposite poles."

"Beethoven," began Katherine, mindful of luminous discourses by Mrs. Nast, "is more serene—"

"Don't forget that he had to accept a system," Hindman argued, escaping himself for the moment. He paused to listen to Robinson's humming of the principal themes of the Symphony; and said softly, "That's it!

I tell you there is nothing like it! Let the frivolous keep Beethoven!"

The door was opened by Bronski who came out on the steps to shake hands with them when Hindman refused to lengthen the evening out by entering the house at that hour. The unusual mildness of the air encouraged conversation.

"You liked the music?" Bronski asked.

"It was made to order," Robinson cried gayly.

"Even the soloist's expression," laughed Katherine.

In reply to a question from Bronski, the doctor frankly stated that he had acted as accoucheur during the last two nights.

Katherine glanced at his hands and shuddered.

"It is chilly," said Raman. "You ought not be standing out after being in a warm room, Mr. Bronski."

"That is a fact. But it wasn't the doctor who reminded me of it. A selfish age, Mr. Raman."

All laughed: and with an exchange of good wishes for the night, the three men departed, quickly plunging into a comparison of schools of music, and seeking universal laws to explain their preferences.

CHAPTER X

"BRONSKI is sick," was Hindman's news when he next met the poet. The doctor was standing on the steps ready to go out.

"So!" Raman lifted dull eyes which met the other man's only for an instant. "Is it serious?"

The tone lacked the interest Hindman expected.

"No. A cold. I watched you come crawling down the street as if you would never get here. You don't look well."

"I have not slept as soundly as I wished."

Hindman scrutinized the pale features with professional sharpness.

"We'll talk about it when we come back. I am on my way to Bronski now. Suppose you come along."

"The stroll will help me. You will not stay long?"

"I am only going to see the patient." And then he said hastily, "A man makes a fool of himself when he don't order his work sensibly. Are you trying to grow rich?"

The pace seemed to dissatisfy Raman.

"Don't loaf," he protested. "It's the only exercise I have had for some time."

"You must expect miracles in the next few moments. It reminds me of the young fellows from the sweat-shops in New York who go to punch the bag in gymnasiums provided by our German brethren. But the wisest thing you can do is to take yourself off to some farm about

here where you can really get isolation, as well as fresh air."

"It is only a passing indisposition."

"I hope so."

Raman shot a glance at his friend whose face revealed nothing.

They arrived at the street in which the Bronskis lived, and the poet had a painful moment which did not altogether escape his friend.

"You need not go up to the sick room," said the doctor.

"Thanks. That helps me."

Katherine opened the door for them. She drew a deep breath when she saw who accompanied Hindman; but after the exchange of greetings, turned her attention entirely to the doctor.

"He is feeling better," she said. "By all means impress it upon him that he must not be in a hurry to get out. He will not listen to me."

When Hindman was ready to ascend the stairs, he said:

"I am going to leave our friend behind. He is also not well. In creating the beautiful he forgets that he has a nervous system. Don't look surprised: poets get sick once in a while. I order you to discuss nothing but the lightest subjects,—like woman, or the fashions, and so forth. I don't want him left a wreck on your hands." And he quickly took himself off.

"I think we prefer live poets," said Katherine, trying to smile. "It is one of our failings. You know we haven't many;—I mean poets."

"I shall survive, I promise you." His flickering gaze gave her strange courage.

"Surely you can be serviceable in the matter of advice to yourself!" she cried.

He was as much confused as touched by her warmth.

"Don't take Hindman seriously," he objected. "It would make me a gloomy man if *I* did. For one thing he advises me to go to the country." The light died out of the woman's eyes. "The country at this time of the year, mind you! It is simply his desire to play the physician. The rôle becomes him occasionally. Those of his profession are a curious lot. I never knew one of them who was not more eager to give advice than to follow it."

"This time he is really in earnest," she hazarded.

"Oh, mine is a constitution that defies even the onslaught of critics. To come to something more serious, I hope you have not been frightened about Mr. Bronski."

"Oh, I knew it was not a dangerous illness. But his business is suffering; an important consideration, believe me." Her smile was a failure. "We are not rich."

"None of us are except in the things which are not commonly understood to constitute riches."

"What a slip of the tongue! To forget that your Socialism puts bread above soul!" Her sudden burst of gayety hardly deceived him.

"We prefer the bread, in a measurable quantity, below the place usually assigned the soul." He grew serious again. "You show plainly that you have been worrying, my friend."

"Don't take on that scolding tone, or I shall be asking you to deny that *you* have been entirely free from worry."

"I'll not scold," he said with sudden hunger for sympathy.

"I routed you by a guess. How can people have the courage to be handing down advice?"

"It helps them."

They laughed softly.

"Tell me, have you done anything lately outside of what you printed?" she asked.

In a little while conventional reserve had taken wings. So for a time they found familiar speech delightful, since it thrust into the background the critical sense, and left them free for trifling that would perhaps be meaningless to retrospective moments.

Raman allowed his mood to grow lighter. His lassitude disappeared; and he felt refreshed. Several times the woman attempted to lift the conversation to a higher plane; but he would have none of it. Her delight at this rare display of temper was not checked when she realized that he was playing a part. So the truant spirit ruled for the time being.

Hindman almost chuckled when he found them laughing.

"Mr. Bronski will be about in a few days," he announced. "But I have ordered him to stay in bed for another week; unless he is eager for pneumonia. Do you know, Raman, many sick people are frauds. It grows upon me more and more."

"You have reference to myself?"

"Oh, I almost forgot you were not feeling well."

"Well, don't dare tell Mr. Bronski that he deceives himself," Katherine cried. "He refuses to go to bed until he is ready to fall from his feet. Surely he ought to understand the importance of medical treatment! Men are so infantile!"

"He has sympathy for other sick people only. You see, living on the other side of a drug-counter, he feels himself above such things as colds. A layman is lucky sometimes." Every glance the doctor directed at the woman was sharp and searching.

"It is simply madness," protested the woman. "He jokes, and promises to outlive me. It is only to others that he sometimes speaks of not feeling well." She could have bitten off her tongue for the words. "His one argument is that he is not a woman."

"You have not had a sick day that I can remember," Hindman said with a smile.

"I a sick woman! The idea is horrible!"

Raman got to his feet, his mien sober enough to satisfy himself.

"As for invalid number two," said Hindman turning to him, "I shall get you a bottle of prosaic chemicals that will return the soul to its ordinary brilliancy. A glorious day, Mrs. Bronski. A pity you are tied to the house."

"Our duties, my friend," she made reply.

At the door she said nothing to Raman about calling again.

The doctor found the sunshine pleasant.

"What beggarly creatures we are!" he exclaimed. "Some light and heat, and we grow young!"

The other's silence brought a grunt from him.

Raman's thoughts pieced together ran thus:

"She is lonely, ashamed, helpless, desperate. She is losing—if she has not already lost—all sympathy for the man who has thrust himself into her life. And but for fear of what the world would say, she would have left him long ago. What has he in common with her? A crutch to the girl, he has grown to be a burden to her sensitive conscience. The burden is almost driving her mad. It is robbing her of her womanliness. She has nothing left to her but her ambition; and for that reason concentrates every thought upon it. Can he not see that she is less concerned with his illness than with the trials

it involves? She is not lying to him; it is he who is deceiving himself."

He would not allow that he might be coloring the situation.

"She has strength; but fears to threaten the future. Do I understand the woman? She conceals nothing."

He shrank from discussing the matter with the man beside him.

"Why are you so quiet?" he asked suddenly.

"Was it I?" growled the doctor.

Katherine had at once gone to the sick-room where Bronski lay in a night-gown, his unshaven, grey-white face staring oddly out of the depths of the pillow.

"Hindman made short work of it," he cried. "I will be about next week. I suppose he told you."

"Yes," said Katherine quietly. "He thinks, though, that you will do something that will bring on complications." Then, almost with anger: "You must be careful!"

"Of course I shall wait a few days. Don't worry about it, dear. I shall take care; believe me."

"I hope so."

She went about the sick-room putting things in order, but always kept at arm's length from the bed.

"It is disgusting to lie here so helpless," groaned Bronski. "It almost makes me ashamed of myself. I'll have to take greater care than I have done."

"Is there anything you want just now?"

"Some fresh water. You look tired, dear. You are feeling well?"

"Oh, yes. I suppose I have been too much in the house. But it doesn't matter. I have grown accustomed to it."

"Well, I'll sleep this afternoon. You can get your things on and go out. It is sunshiny and bright." He wistfully studied the bit of sky over his window.

She asked, "You are sure you will sleep?"

"Yes, dear," He suppressed a sigh, and said, "Ah, I'm glad the boy at the store can be depended on. It would have been an awful worry."

"Of course you will pay Hindman."

"He will refuse; but I shall insist. I don't think he gives enough attention to his practice now, and he can't be making much money. And then we mustn't forget that he sends all the prescriptions he writes in the neighborhood to me. A queer man! I wonder how many understand him? He can be as soft as a child sometimes. I believe he actually pitied me," Bronski discovered, with a laugh.

"What?" cried the woman sharply.

"I suppose he thinks money-matters are disturbing me."

"We can very well get along without his pity."

"Well, don't look at it that way. I simply couldn't understand why he was so pleasant. Dear, won't you kiss me before you go?"

Although she turned to him obediently, her mouth quivered with pain.

"If you wish it."

She bent over him, and her lips swept his forehead.

"I hope you will be in no hurry to return," he said; and sighed.

She had moved out of his reach.

"I will see."

When she was alone, she cried:

"Well, what will be the end? Must I suffer like that? I am helpless! I am helpless! The world does not

seem to be the same. Must that be another burden? Oh, God help me! Bah! I am like a child!"

She quaked with fear before the future that persisted in unrolling itself. But one solution offered—No! There were two! And the second involved the first. "I am mad to expect it!" she cried. "It is not only improbable, but impossible! Why should I be so desperate as to expect it?"

Soon after she went out, turning her steps in the direction of Mrs. Nast's house.

CHAPTER XI

THE activity of the Christmas week found its way into the Jewish quarter, and even Dr. Hindman was the recipient of New Year greetings. A period of cheerfulness consequent upon busy days put him in the mood to seek out Raman whom he had not seen for some days, when it happened that the poet was shown into his office.

"I thought you had made one job of the whole bottle," said the doctor, shaking his hand without manifesting much feeling.

"Really! Then you don't read the newspapers."

"Yours, once in a while."

"It helps the circulation. As for your drugs, I followed your directions instead of any fanciful ones. Strange that you should ordinarily be disposed to effect a cure!"

"I would say you look well; but seem too much a man with a grievance. What made you come out of your blessed solitude?"

"The air of festivity everywhere. Our next Jewish generation ought to be broad-minded enough to celebrate Christmas, as a means of stealing the enemy's thunder. Can you tell me anything new?"

"I read with patience some columns you wrote."

"Well! Well! Where is your consistency?" Raman laughed.

"Suppose I ask you that question!"

"It was the article on 'Stage Realism,' eh?"

"Your conscience must hurt you pretty badly."

"It was not done in haste. So you read it all!"

"Yes. And am now following with interest the loving names you are being called by the conservative press. Coming after Danvitz's new play it was sure to raise a storm. You ought to feel proud about the way they hate you. Confess that you enjoy it!"

"Ah, Hindman, think of the many they mislead! You know we have created a drama in Yiddish second to none, if realism is the last word. And really, Danvitz and the others have put their souls into the work. And then to be called 'Defilers of the Public Morals!' I could not remain quiet."

"Don't get so excited. It is the business of the other side to prove not only that you are wrong, but rascals in the bargain. To come back to the article, let me say I was surprised." He looked at the poet through half-closed eyes. "I did not recognize it as yours—despite the style—until I got to the name. You must have been very indignant."

"I am glad you liked it." Raman was uneasy.

"How do you know I did? But jesting aside, I felt that I would have liked to have written it myself."

"That is kind of you. I hope it cleared the atmosphere."

Hindman laughed.

"You have made it worse," he said. "It will be war to the end."

"The attack, I noticed this morning, has become personal; but they are beating the air. I have lived an open life."

"And the gentleman who owns the opposition sheets is a pious Jew. And he is a philanthropist. And he has

a warm heart for every bearded member of his race who reads his paper, and who is an uncomplaining sweat-shop worker. So you are both pretty helpless. Listen," came with surprising friendliness: "accept what you have written, and furnish us a play. I want to see how you would go about solving the marriage problem."

Raman halted in the turn he was taking about the room.

"You feel the swerve from idealism?" he asked, fixing searching eyes upon the doctor.

"To the deuce with your idealism! For once you spoke the truth as would one who is not blind to what is going on around him. If it is your indignation that does this sort of thing, I would advise you to give way to it oftener."

"I said nothing new."

"It was enough to set New York to talking. What a lucky man you are to have stumbled upon the fact at this late day that nothing arouses like a good shout. If I were you I would keep at this distance. It would be more like isolation just now."

"I was thinking of going back."

"So? She has grown cold?"

"What?"

Raman had lost color, and was staring at his friend with anger and astonishment. Suddenly he started, and laughed.

"Oh, I see. No. I wondered what you meant. I forgot that I had made you a confidante."

"You are only *thinking* of going back?"

"I have not made up my mind."

"Are you trying to be odd?" Hindman asked, gazing quizzically at the other man whose face seemed to have hardened in the last few weeks.

For an instant the poet threw himself into an attitude which promised speech; but only said:

"You do not doubt my honesty, I hope."

"Every man is honest to himself; or would be mentally unbalanced."

They were silent; and both gazed out of the window upon a walled-in space,—commonly called a 'yard,'—where a child was taking advantage of the sunshine to perambulate, gravely, with a coach and doll.

Hindman forgot himself long enough to sigh; then cried, "Nonsense! Nonsense! We are not children! Although at times it all seems very simple."

Raman leaned forward, and put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Does it?" he asked.

"If we trust first instincts. But doesn't it appear to you that we have changed identities to-day? You are beginning to be more of a puzzle; only you are wise enough to dissemble. Let me feel your pulse.—Normal. You are sleeping?"

"Yes."

"Then you are out of my province. If it is the result of your indignation that you get into moods like these, we can sacrifice your defense of the Realist. You know we expect certain things of you—"

"Come, don't be frivolous," protested Raman, resuming his walk about the room.

"Oh, I wasn't before you came. What objection have you to becoming a social animal again? To-morrow is New Year's Eve—"

"So I was apprised by the Goldmans," the poet laughed. "I suppose it means another feast. But I won't go; since I won't go alone; and to go with you is to be conscious all the time that you are laughing at them."

"Oh, *I'll* go. My invitation must have been sent me in the hope that I'd bring you,—not you me. Don't stay away. Mrs. Goldman will have read your poems by this time, and will be able to discuss them at some length. Her sister-in-law is still unmarried. (I hope you have not been blind to the attractions of that lady.) And Goldman will want to be spiritual after the year's money-making."

Raman nodded absently.

"And then we will have plenty of time left to go to the Russian Club," added the doctor.

"Ah, yes! What is it?" Raman asked, turning to him. "I have heard it spoken of, casually. I got an invitation."

"It is composed of our intellectually Wandering Jews. They were slow in getting together this year. I don't see why they didn't have you deliver a lecture on art. They will if you stay much longer. A pity you don't know something about painting; you would overawe them. On that subject they are entirely deficient. Have you seen the Bronskis lately?" he asked carelessly.

"No. I would have come here."

"Absurd. You sometimes make me believe that you are a boy. You once went yourself. Why are you afraid of doing it again?"

"Hindman, you make me very impatient with your show of wisdom," said the poet irritably.

"And you with the ease with which you discover hidden meanings. Tell me, what do you think of them? Be honest."

"Is it more than mere curiosity that prompts you to ask the question?"

"I am serious. You have been here long enough to have had a fair look at it."

After a glance Raman was satisfied that the other man's question had not been put in a trifling spirit.

"All I can say is that their relation to one another does not appeal to me," he confessed hesitatingly.

"You have not excused them. Your opinion is getting to be worth something."

Raman ran his hand through his hair with a nervous motion.

"I don't believe the woman would excuse herself," he said. "You may have seen it."

"I haven't been watching her closely of late." And Hindman hurried on to say, "She interested me at one time. I have several photographs of her in costume put away somewhere. But—" He shrugged his shoulders slightly, and was silent. The other's soft, "Well?" aroused him. "Well, I am so restless myself that I could not think of multiplying it by two. That was the only time I allowed my head to rule in a matter of that sort."

"You think she would have been willing to exchange Bronski for you?" came quietly.

"Are you insinuating that she might have gained nothing?" the doctor laughed. "Be it to my credit that I was for once considerate, and made no effort to cheat Bronski out of his happiness."

"She must be restless under the strain of her position."

"You can't read a woman like that easily. Although that may not be your opinion. All this ado she makes about her ambitions not being realized tires me. Of course she may wish to escape Bronski,—especially—Well, but now,"—quickly, to cover the retreat from the suggested thought—"is her period of transition. She will learn to accustom herself soon, I suppose. That is

the direction it will take, unless she is shaken out of her fixity. One thing,—she is no longer a girl; she will not change conditions without looking carefully into the future."

"You have given her some thought," admitted Raman.

"It is interesting—like a problem in surgery when unknown things are involved."

"I, too, have thought it over. You believe she has strength?"

"Strength? Bah! The least of many women I know who pose less. She is a coward!" It was like a snarl.

"Put yourself in her place, Hindman,—sympathetically."

"I can't. It turns my stomach. What do you expect?"

"You don't allow for the times we are living in. Think how we are at the mercy of countless things!—"

Hindman laughed uproariously.

"*You* put forward such a defence! Well! Don't talk nonsense to me! I have no pity to spare; nor desire to soften the situation. But what is the use of getting excited? I have but one name for her." He gave it; but the man before him was unmoved, and said simply:

"No, you have no mercy."

"My way of looking at it should appeal to you," Hindman said with an uneasy laugh. "Am I not looking down from big heights? The truth is paramount. Her case does not bother me to any great extent. I have seen it so long that, like her, I am almost reconciled. There are more interesting instances of mating that might command one's pity."

"I do not believe it," said Raman very quietly.

"Well, no matter what happens now, she has thought

too much of herself and her ambitions to play second fiddle to any ordinary man. If it's a hero she is waiting for, she will have plenty of time to accustom herself to the society of the failures: I heard she considers several of us that. Even now she is growing tired of shrieking against the cruelty of an unappreciative world."

"You are guessing," murmured the poet. "You are guessing."

"Nonsense! Do you think it is awfully hard to put one's self in her place?"

Raman's silence nettled the doctor.

"Why not talk it over?" he urged, watching the other man carefully. "I want what they call 'swapping views.' How unlike the rational lower animal world!"

"Rational!"

"Very well: we shall call Katherine Bronski rational. You won't quarrel to-day, eh?"

Raman smiled—sadly, it seemed to his friend.

"I leave it all to you," he said.

"Our town shouldn't make you gloomy. You discuss these things where you come from. But you are so sensitive that one feels like providing a glass case for you." And then he earnestly warned, "Keep the spectator's attitude by all means. I wouldn't want you to grow into a sad man."

If he expected an outburst, he was doomed to disappointment. Raman said with a shrug, "How blind you are!"

"All right. I thought I was a little too brave."

The door bell rang. Before its sound died away, a girl, thin, ill-clad, with tear-stained face hurried in.

"Please, doctor, father has got another hemorrhage," she sobbed.

"I'll be right there." And Hindman was on his

feet, and had caught up some vials. "Go home," he said. "I'm coming. Tell your mother that she knows what to do. I'll be right there."

The little, ill-shod feet, took themselves off as if on wings. The doctor said quickly to Raman:

"Serious. In the last stages of tuberculosis. You'll be around to-morrow evening?"

"Yes. Yes. Go!"

He followed him out, and took his way in the opposite direction.

"Hindman has more pity in his nature than he will allow. Poor child! How can my problems be serious in comparison?" After a moment the poet asked, "Am I trifling? Have I given it the thought it deserves? Even he finds much to be passed upon. I should go back to New York; but that would be flight. I would be doing what I would counsel no man to do."

He straightened up; but a few minutes later was back again to the question of flight.

"Is Hindman right?" he suddenly cried. "Or is he belittling the woman? What does he mean by strength?—that she should startle the world by dramatically throwing Bronski over? So much has he lived in theory! If it were his case? He ought to see that life often robs us of courage, diminishes our powers of resistance. What did he count for when he faced actual conditions? Strength! He could not put himself in her place. Of course he discerns my interest, and does not mind putting on the screws."

"How do you do, Mr. Raman?"

A young man who had passed him, going in his direction, had halted, and was holding out his hand. The poet recognized a student he had met at the Goldmans.

"How do you do?" he said, trying to smile.

CHAPTER XII

"YOU certainly look well in black," was Hindman's greeting to the poet the next evening.

"What a fortunate observation when a man has a mirror which is only two feet by two! Greys become you wonderfully."

"I don't give much attention to dress now, I will confess," said the doctor, coloring a little with pleasure. "As you know, that was not always true."

"I always thought in those days that you would have sported a cane if you had not been afraid of losing favor with your union," laughed Raman.

Time passed pleasantly in jest; and then the friends discoursed on the New Year, growing serious as their struggles in a not very remote past occupied their attention.

"It will be the same with the rest of the procession," said Hindman. "Men coming up to the firing line believe that they will be the exception, and will escape with a whole skin. We forgave our conceit when we coined the word 'hero.' If you had seen as many corpses as I—"

"You have an odd way of falling upon the sad," scolded the poet.

"Perhaps I ought to make a resolution to-morrow that I will be happy forever after."

"Don't see it in the light of a joke. You have been happy."

"My memory is very treacherous."

"By the way—that tubercular patient of yours—"

"He is dead," said the doctor almost absently.

"A large family?"

"Of course!" growled Hindman, now aroused. "Do you think they are rich?"

"Ah, my dear friend, it is not that they wanted to dispute your logic. The horror of it all will be the way they will have to crawl to get a few dollars from the charity organizations. What a New Year! Couldn't we spare a little money?"

"I thought you would try to solve the problem in that magnificent way. Well, it has already cost me fifteen dollars outside of medicine." Raman guessed that he had not included his services. "I don't know that I can do much more than that. What can you give?"

"Twenty. We might get some club to make an affair. I would read—"

"Oh, stop it! If you saw the cases we physicians come across, you would end by either becoming a poor man or a heartless one. The hardening process which every agent of the Charity Organization undergoes is natural. For once the Christians do it a little better than we."

"The Goldmans might be spoken to—"

"My, what an opportunist you can be! I guess it will prove all right. The old Mrs. Goldman is both charitable and kind-hearted. And you may be able to squeeze a few dollars out of the Russian Club. There will be plenty of leisure for that performance: they wait for the sun to rise before they disperse to their homes."

At the Goldmans the evening promised to be a repetition of the last. The student body interrupted its shouting and singing to welcome the new-comers. The family of the merchant crowded about the poet, and made

an heroic effort to win his good opinion, until Hindman, who had been ignored, became boisterous, and gained the centre of the stage, allowing his friend to escape from a difficult position.

Then the doctor suddenly became quiet, and went off in a corner to smoke. He emerged later to discuss biology with Dr. Ratner, soon surrounding himself with eager listeners.

Raman was relieved to find the talk less formal than on the former occasion; although before much time had elapsed, the younger Mrs. Goldman—true to Hindman's prediction—touched upon his poems, and favored him with those lines which she considered his best.—("Your masterpieces," she called them.)—Her sister-in-law listened with painful patience, now and then adjusting the costly silks, and striking new attitudes.

Dr. Ratner, feeling it incumbent upon him to add to the gayety, danced a waltz with a little girl. Then a student who boasted muscular development and sound teeth did tricks with both in conjunction with a heavy chair.

After this all made their way to the table.

Toasts by the students in honor of the Goldmans allowed the acknowledged head of the house—the younger Mr. Goldman—to make a speech; which he concluded by pledging the poet, and dwelling on his worth and efforts "in behalf of an appreciative humanity."

Beneath the array of stilted words lay respect and sincerity; and when he called upon Raman to speak, the latter did not hesitate.

He touched on the importance of friendship, and thanked them for the welcome accorded him on his appearance among them. He next essayed a brief discussion of the problems that confronted every man in his

life-work, appealing to the students to extend a helping hand to the many with whom they came in contact. "Too quickly we forget the interests of the other man!" he warned. He made mention of the destitute family which faced the new year without any hope of the morrow. With a feeling that most of his words were wasted on them, he dropped into Yiddish, and turning to the elder Goldmans spoke of the orphans and widow, and secured a promise that the matter would be looked into.

When he found his seat, the applause was hearty.

Hindman was called upon. He skillfully ridiculed the poet's utilitarianism; and dragged in biology to prove that "we must accept the dictum 'Each man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost,' or become as children." He finished with, "So I drink to the man who has no use for pretty words, and can shrug his shoulders when the world either rejoices at its foolishness or quarrels over it."

No sooner did he regain his seat than he was assailed on every side; but instead of shrugging his shoulders at what he considered absurdities, he fought the objections of his adversaries tooth and nail. Again and again they were crushed by ponderous strokes of his logic, as too audacious members of a pack are brought down by a bear at bay. He would often wax personal, much to their discomfort, for he was quick to discern their failings.

He was not satisfied when they left the field; and Goldman's chance discourse on the methods of great industrial captains brought a host of questions from the doctor that made the merchant wince. Champions for the host were not wanting, so that the strife did not slacken.

The poet smiled at the return of Hindman's old fight-

ing spirit. He would have wished it more than an evening's amusement for the doctor. Meanwhile everything was at a standstill as the struggle raged. Little courtesy was shown, and seemed not to be expected. It appeared that everyone had accepted the dictum, "Each man for himself."

The elder Mrs. Goldman, finding courage in the din, cried in Yiddish, "Why don't you eat? Why talk so much and leave things untasted?"

Beginning with the man nearest that lady silence spread about the table; her logic found not a disputant. They busied themselves with the "tasting" process until the board was almost swept clean.

Then they returned to the parlor where soft seats were greeted with sighs of satisfaction, and languor seized upon many. Talent was in demand.

One of the students had brought a violin, and he started a college song which was taken up with a roar. At its close Berenson rendered a Yiddish melody, and was cheered by his fellows. Then Miss Jennie Goldman tried a popular air to Gorun's uncertain accompaniment. "She doesn't lack courage," whispered someone in Raman's neighborhood.

When the young lady had bowed herself to her seat, Hindman arose.

"You intend to sing?" cried Dr. Ratner.

"No. We are going." Which was the signal for a noisy protest.

"Why so early?" "What's your hurry?" "Do stay!" "Why, the fun is just beginning!" and similar cries left the doctor unmoved.

"Mr. Raman and myself are on our way to the Russian Club," he explained.

"A little later," pleaded Goldman. "They can't ex-

pect you at this hour. They never get together early. I know them."

"Certainly they expect us. They will resent our coming much later."

It pointed clearly to the honor conferred upon the Goldmans by the presence of the two men. After a general handshaking they were released.

Once in the street a spirit of gayety seized upon them.

"You ought to thank me," cried the doctor. "But of course you will pretend you enjoyed it."

"One thing struck me above all things," laughed Raman.

"Ah! The young lady they have in view for you!"

"Nonsense! No; the way those students disposed of everything in sight. It was an inspiration."

"What else can they do so well? But really, there were things there to give a man an appetite. I have an idea that there will be no more of it; they are about ready to give you up as a possible suitor."

"I don't see why they should. I ate next to nothing, as befits a man touched by Mrs. Nast's 'grand passion.' Which might explain why you did not starve yourself."

"I always had a reputation for storing away a great deal. What else could *I* do there that would be better appreciated?"

"Make them a speech every time you are invited."

"They certainly deserve it."

"You had to keep up your reputation, I suppose. But it clashed with the wine and the cakes."

"You must have been grateful for the way they rejected my philosophy."

"Was it philosophy?" laughed the poet. "I didn't think you took it with such seriousness."

"Good heavens! What a man you are turning into! How many weeks have you been among us? I know you did not have much wine."

"Perhaps you have gained a disciple."

"You called my philosophy garbled a minute ago."

And so the banter continued. The doctor finally discerned that it covered uneasiness in the poet, and he spoke of the people they were likely to encounter at the club, incidentally mentioning Katherine Bronski.

"Surely she will not stay until morning!" said Raman. "Oh, I forgot her husband would be present."

"He won't."

"But for her to go home at that hour—"

"Accompanied by a man? It is nothing. Perhaps the duty will fall on us."

Raman was displeased with the abrupt termination of the walk.

"Are we not too early?" he asked.

"Not at all."

The hum of voices carried through the windows affected the poet strangely for a moment as they stopped before the quarters of the club.

"The place must be packed," said Hindman; and led the way through an entry into a large room heavy with tobacco smoke.

They were greeted with a shout. A man rushed forward, and relieved them of their overcoats and hats.

At the end of a long table stood a samovar from which hot water was drawn for tea by two ladies who chattered incessantly while they served the many crowding into that corner of the room.

The assemblage interested Raman, who was not surprised to find a goodly number of the women belonging to the dental and medical professions. All present

seemed to be conversant with Russian which was spoken in preference to any other tongue. Few were markedly Jewish in appearance, except for the suggestion of race-shrewdness about the eyes. The conservatives, who were a small minority, steered clear of certain topics in discussion.

Raman and the doctor had found glasses of tea awaiting them; and the poet shook hands as far as he could reach from his place at the table while an assortment of names was thrust upon his memory. Katherine Bronski passed him the sugar when he extended his hand towards her, and he tried to smile. He was drawn into conversation by his neighbor, a dark little woman who discussed Socialist tactics with great earnestness, and took him to task for suspected heresies.

Dr. and Mrs. N· ·t appeared; and after bowing profoundly in several ections, separated, the lady going to Raman. She ıquired minutely after his health, and declared herself pleased with his presence. "We needed a poet for such an occasion," she said gravely.

Then leaning over Katherine's chair, she kissed her on both cheeks, and told her that she was unusually beautiful.

A lawyer, one of the successful men of the community, tall, rotund, bald, approached Raman, and greeted him with a heavy discharge of English. He said in part, "I have become estranged, I regret to say, from the Yiddish art-world in the press of professional duties."

Laughter nearby clashed with the pose of the successful attorney. Raman allowed him to have the lion's share of the conversation; but despite this, the impression the New Yorker produced was not favorable; and when the lawyer returned to some of his friends, he apprised them that the poet "was a man of the pen rather than of the tongue."

Miss Rovno made haste to seek out Raman. She chatted gayly, studiously avoiding Katherine's eyes, and the poet wondered at her animation, little aware that it was assumed.

The hubbub in the room was stilled by calls of: "Hush! Hush!"

Robinson had gone to the piano. Several suggested the selection in the Schubert album which would be most to their taste. They compromised on the Serenade. Then he turned the pages to the "Doppelgänger," and prefaced its rendering with an appeal for close attention. "It is difficult to understand," he warned them.

Evidently they "understood," for the applause was hearty.

"What a pleasure to accompany you, Mr. Robinson!" cried Mrs. Nast, turning about slowly on the stool.

"What a pleasure to sing to your accompaniment!" he said with a very low bow, his hand on his heart.

Mrs. Nast frowned down the laughter.

Instead of calling upon her to add to the evening's entertainment, they turned to Katherine Bronski. Strangely generous, she did not cease until the third round of applause.

Then the successful attorney took charge of affairs, and made a lengthy speech in which he congratulated the club on its ability to gather so much of culture under one roof. He finished by asking Dr. Hindman if he had not "words of greeting for the incoming year?"

The doctor attempted some jests at the expense of the speaker. But the audience expected more of the man who had at one time stood high in the estimation of the Jewish communities of two great cities.

"Be serious," urged one of his friends.

"All right!" he cried, putting his head back, and

squaring his shoulders. Without hesitation he began to flay his audience unmercifully, growing more and more sarcastic as he proceeded, until they wriggled restlessly and protested in low murmurs.

Then with blazing eyes he began to pass upon the "absurdities of our lying society," laughing at its pretensions, mocking its efforts, and picking its morality to pieces; and he sneered at his hearers for their acquiescence in what they feigned to despise.

Ceasing suddenly, he shrugged his shoulders, and took his seat.

There was painful silence. Several cleared their throats, but they failed to get to their feet.

At last the lawyer who was master of ceremonies arose, and began in bland tones:

"After the anarchy of thought to which we listened so carefully in our desire to do Dr. Hindman the fullest justice, I propose to—"

"I beg your pardon!" cried Hindman, springing to his feet. "When I followed you did I say, 'After the absurdity of thought to which we listened so impatiently—'"

"I beg *your* pardon!" interrupted the lawyer angrily.

"I excuse you; only I do not want you to translate my analysis of the motives of those who make up our so-called civilization in terms of your own."

"What would you prefer?" sneered the lawyer.

"That you either oppose what I said by reasonable argument; or leave me alone."

"Since I do not care to debate a topic of that magnitude on an occasion like this evening, I will ignore it." And turning to the others, the lawyer went on, "If we are to make selection of any man to answer pessimism with optimism, our choice would fall upon one who has

won his laurels in the field of letters." He continued in the same strain until he decided to close with, "And my references are to Mr. Alexander Raman, erstwhile resident of New York."

The applause was hearty.

Raman began by saying:

"I will hardly attempt to solve great problems for you to-night, for, to begin with, I am only armed with a little poem which was written for the occasion, and which, perhaps, will serve as a test of your patience." All were delighted. "And if I say anything in addition, it will not be in any argumentative spirit, believe me. At most call it my guess."

When he had finished reading the poem, there was more applause, and cries of, "Bravo! Bravo!"

He put the bit of paper aside, and spoke of the nobility of sincere effort, of the futility of the destructive spirit, and of the bond between those who find purpose in their ordering of life and exalt that purpose, and those who wish to face life bravely.

Softly he touched on the seeking after truth, the struggle, grief, and helplessness of the average man in his groping, and the need of ready hearts and courageous voices to make life bearable. And moved by the thoughts that exacted expression, his words came like a torrent, breaking down all prejudices, and wiping out the pasts of many, so that they listened with youthful eagerness.

The message had come to them in days gone, but not with the same appeal. Deathly stillness reigned in the room, except for some chance clink of spoon against glass. The man before them, pale with emotion, seemed a channel for the expression of their dreams and longings. And as he finished by taking them in imagination over the

world to show them how much they were part and parcel of it, they leaned forward hungrily, some with eyes closed and head bent low.

When he turned away, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, they started up and then their hands sought each other in applause.

Whispers flew back and forth. Even Hindman glanced sidelong at the poet with softened eyes. Many came forward to shake the New Yorker's hand, among them Katherine, who said, "I thank you, my friend."

The general thought was that the evening would not be soon forgotten.

It required a considerable interval for the extinguished mirth to gain the ascendency. When it did so, right merrily did the men and women give reign to the careless mood. Songs without number were heard, discussions without number; and incomplete logic dealt riotously with idealism, and over-frankly with materialism.

Raman sat silent for some time, often warmed by a chance expression that was poetic truth. He was thankful for the averted face of Katherine who seemed preoccupied.

Russian melodies—their plaintiveness carrying many back to their youth curious as to world and deed—found him one of the singers.

And so hour after hour went by, a few of the members braving public contempt by taking themselves off.

Raman found a seat beside Katherine.

"I suppose Mr. Bronski is sleeping the sleep of the just," he began.

"Yes. He has little inclination to see the sun rise. You really like what is going on about you?"

"Very much. Notice how the place seems brighter with all these good people indifferent to the thousand things that estrange human kind."

"Ah, yes. They are very forgiving to-night. To-morrow they will not be the same individuals, they who have known life intimately, and yet bend the head." Her contempt was touched with sadness.

"They must return to it," he said softly.

"They *will* return to it," echoed the woman.

A thrill went through the man, and he said, almost sharply :

"How fast they must be approaching the point in life which means fixity!"

"There is such a point?" she asked in the quietest of tones.

He glanced at her face; but she kept her eyelids lowered.

"Yes," he answered, "there is such a point. Once reached, we accept everything. Conditions and prejudices fit us just right. And we meet idealism with an, 'Ah, yes! I know!'—and smile."

"Surely the maker of art is exempt!" said the woman, unsteadily.

"Not always. A few have managed to keep growing. But as a rule one does not start at the great shadows as the years go by."

"To be old, then," she said with an unexpected smile, "is to be stupid, eh?"

"You forget in how many new ways old views can be put. It is very satisfying—I should imagine. But I am saddening you."

"What if so? Why should we be afraid of the truth? It is only a child that is frightened easily. Is that song not beautiful?"

Robinson was giving the "Prize Song" from the "Meistersinger."

She added, "It is the moment that makes the song. Just as on the stage one trembles as grand lines are approached."

"I know," he said simply.

Suddenly she asked in a low voice:

"Listen: why do you not come to see us?"

"You will not accept any excuse seriously?"

"As you wish. I have noticed that your work of late has improved. Is it the quiet?"

"I think so. During the last few days I have done some verse in English. I want to show them to you."

"Ah! Thank you!" Her delight was sweet to him, though he trembled a little.

He called her attention to Hindman. "See how he has forgotten himself. And many believe they understand him!"

The doctor was chatting gayly to Miss Rovno, and had as audience several ladies who basked in the sunshine of his rare mood. Laughter often came from the group, like others in its abandon.

Eyes lacked lustre as the morning approached. And soon soft conversation ruled; except where a little, black-haired, bespectacled fellow sang for his own amusement the Cavatina from "Faust" as an introduction to unkind remarks about the Wagner school of music. The majority were impatiently awaiting the glow on the horizon which would herald the sunrise and their release.

At last the rosy tint appeared, hardly marked enough, but sufficient to send every person in a rush for hats and coats. Then like a troop of children they piled merrily out of the house, and took the nearest way home.

The arc lights were paling; a few wagons crawled

along the street rails; cars appeared with greater frequency, though with decreased speed; and here and there shutters were flung open.

"Dr. Hindman and Mr. Raman, yours shall be the duty of taking Mrs. Bronski home," Mrs. Nast announced as she and her husband were about to turn off in another direction.

"A pleasant duty," Hindman said with a smile. "I suppose Mr. Raman agrees with me."

"We have forgotten to ask," the poet reminded them, "whether Mrs. Bronski will consider it pleasant."

"Mrs. Bronski," said that lady, "has not one objection to offer; only her thanks for your kindness."

She kissed Mrs. Nast warmly, and departed with the two men.

"I think," said Mrs. Nast to her sleepy spouse, "that Katherine Bronski has changed lately. She is *so* gloomy."

"Yes?"

"She is *so* ambitious."

"Yes?"

Mrs. Nast sighed, and was silent under her burden of thought.

The object of her commiseration was saying:

"The neighborhood will wonder at the freak of coming home at daylight."

"Of course you care," said Hindman mischievously.

"Oh, I was considerate only of *your* feelings."

They laughed; but Katherine colored.

She let herself in with a key after thanking both men with pointed quietness as if to place the night's doings in an absurd light.

The men were silent when they went down the street. Suddenly Hindman laughed.

"What is it?" asked the poet.

"I was thinking what a picture Bronski must make snoring in bed. Wouldn't you like a glimpse of him?"

"Don't be a fool," came shortly.

"Which of us is the bigger fool, do you think?"

"What has gotten over you?" asked Raman, looking at him in amazement.

"Nothing. How far do you intend to go in this affair?"

"What are you talking about?" Raman's show of indignation was pitiful.

"You are certainly losing your balance; very plainly so."

"Was it apparent?" asked the poet, speaking calmly now.

"Only to me, I suppose; for I was bent on enjoying my evening. And, again, who would doubt you, Ethical Being?" The other's silence made him serious. "It's not my business, I suppose. You ought to know what you are doing."

"I don't know that I have done anything."

"Or that you are likely to do so? Then go back to New York this morning. You can pack your belongings in a couple of hours."

Raman looked at him with a sad smile.

"It is you who are the Ethical Being," he said.

"Well," growled Hindman, "I never saw three months work a quicker change with any man than it has done with you. I suppose it is too late to go back."

And the doctor smiled when he caught sight of tears in the other man's eyes; and thought, "Well, there will be an end to one sort of preaching, anyhow."

CHAPTER XIII

WITH what appeared an effort, Raman, after putting on his coat, took up the papers lying on his table, and thrust them hurriedly into his pocket. The next moment he had sunk into a seat, and was staring with wide-open eyes before him.

The array of books seemed foreign to his thoughts: too cold for the overmastering emotions; too calm for his weakness.

He groaned, and covered his face with his hands. But the struggle was brief. Springing to his feet he struck the table a resounding blow; and then dealt with the invisible host of disputants thus:

"There has come the hour when I stand entirely isolated, accepting and rejecting deed with complete independence of what has gone before. Either I must be in complete harmony with what I now see to be the truth, or from this day accept the ordinary double rôle as suitable to myself. You tell me it is immoral? I answer that the happiness of two individuals is placed in the scales against that of one; the soul of a young woman against the lust of an old man; my love against his lust." And so he went on, feeling that he was breaking down all obstacles, that he was answering facts with facts.

"The hour when we stand completely isolated," he repeated, thinking of the woman's position rather than of his own; and wrung his hands wearily.

He almost crept through the streets, where the snow was being turned into puddles by the afternoon sun. A swiftly-moving horse sent a shower of mud in his direction. He was not quick enough to escape it all; and the incident brought laughter from some children nearby. He smiled at them. Then he made the parallel: "The opposition press. The mud throwing will amuse other poor children—the ignorant readers."

Before he reached his destination he had halted twice; only to go on, bitter against the indecision which seemed to mock him. Once the admission escaped his lips that if he were to meet Hindman, it would suffice to start him on his way to New York.

The door was opened by Katherine. Her flush found its answer in the paling of his cheek, which she saw with a strange throb of the heart. She expressed neither pleasure nor surprise at his visit.

"Uncomfortably chilly," he said when he was disposing of his overcoat and hat.

"Only a few more months of it," she replied unsteadily.

"You should have thrown on a shawl when you went to the door," he said turning to her.

She caught her breath; and murmured: "You feel the chill? The heater is not working well. It is warmer in the dining room." She led the way to it. "I was busy to-day owing to a new rôle: cook! My girl has deserted me. But that will not prevent tea being ready in a few moments."

"I did not know that you were fashionable enough to have trouble with servants." His laugh was stifled by the suspicion that she had purposely gotten rid of the girl; and he found that he could not muster enough self-command to sit upright in his chair.

She talked briskly as she moved about to place the

glasses for tea; but the trembling of her hands did not escape him. A tremor shot through his body. The next instant he was entirely at ease.

Tea was set before him.

"What of your sun-worship?" she laughed as she drew up a chair so that they were face to face. "Have you entirely recovered from its effects?"

"Easily. Though it was quite a ceremony; quite a ceremony. Patient worshippers, too."

"At least we were certain of the sunshine," she said. "I suppose you spent a pleasant evening."

"A very pleasant one."

"You reminded them of the time when like children they reached out for the sun. They will try to convince us now that it was enough to have aspired. But, my friend, you will pardon me if I say that outside of the momentary pleasure they derived from the talk you gave them, they carried away nothing. How could they? Their lives are full of struggle and quarrel and sordidness. It is just that which numbs one. You say the world never had bigger aspirations for the average man; but see how quickly the people, after enjoying the beautiful, forget it."

"You are scolding," he said softly.

"Oh, I cannot praise! I cannot! What can I say in their favor? You may ask me why I care to meet them. Mind you"—it was like a cry—"I do not say I am better. I cannot say it. But—but I cannot acquiesce."

He was quiet for a space. She watched his lowered eyes with hungry gaze. He broke the silence by saying:

"You must strive to reconcile yourself with the part that has been assigned to you"—But she cut him short with:

"Do not counsel thus, for I would not believe you so unkind." Bitterness marked her tone as she went on. "Suppose you had never emancipated yourself from the machine. Can you see how you would be eating your heart out? What would *you* have said to one who counselled patience? Why, it is just what you detest in the men who defend the present system. But that"—with a smile—"is not the business of to-day. You were to bring the poems."

"I have brought them." He was thankful for her display of self-command.

The neatly-penned pages were laid before her; and then he sat with crossed arms, his interest not centered on the poems.

As he listened to the words falling from her lips, indecision took wings, and he looked lovingly at the woman. She did not lift her eyes from the pages as she read and commented. He realized that not alone he was touched with fear.

When she looked at him, her composure was shaken; but she managed to say, "On the whole it is good, and—and brimful of thought."

"Yes, but it lacks music and color. That is bought only by time."

"A better beginning could not be asked for." And she went on to point out the strong lines, discovering beauties in phrase and structure that he had overlooked, and praising the work, until he cried:

"Oh, you overrate!"

"No! No! You doubt its value because you have been polishing it. A glorious beginning! Go on with this. I wonder whether you have ambition enough. I wonder." She was studying him.

"Ambition? To do good work? As you see."

"No! No! To stand so high that you will have all eyes raised to you! So high that many will come to speak your name with reverence! So high that you will be a power!"

"I could never deceive myself. I assure you I am very mortal, and cannot pose."

"To tower to pose! What would satisfy you?"

"Friends who will say, 'That was what I wanted!' Can you think of recognition that would be greater?"

"I will not quarrel with you," she sighed. "Yet I hesitate to touch upon any other thing. This is vital. Of course you are doing your work as well as you can. And you realize how your friends eagerly await everything that comes from your pen. If that is what you wish, then I can only cry, 'Happy man!'"

She studied her interlocked fingers with dreaming eyes, and almost whispered the words, "I see more and more how a little success would have opened new worlds for me. It is the key to many things."

"Do not be deceived by the value of the rewards of a matter-of-fact world," he warned her.

"Ah, but otherwise we feel walls of iron closing in upon us; and the world cramps one's soul. I once heard somebody say that success was bought at the expense of the spirit. As well put it that life is a sacrifice to the glories of the next world."

"Your happiness is the first consideration," he murmured.

"Ah, no doubt you set me down long ago as the saddest woman you have met."

"I can add nothing to your life. I would if I could."

"You know that I will talk in this strain," she said brokenly, "and yet you bear with me, and come here. You ought not. You ought not. It is wrong of me."

"I had to come here," he said bluntly. Then his words were like a torrent. "Do you think I am given only to my work? That I care for nothing else? As for your ambition—you are bitter against life as a whole because—because—Oh, must we trifle? Do you not understand?"

His hand seized hers insistently. He bent forward.

"I understand," she said, making no effort to withdraw the fingers he crushed.

He suddenly moaned, and his head fell on his breast.

"And now—" he said helplessly.

"And now, Alexander—"

"Ah, I knew, Katherine, that this would happen if I took advantage of our being thrown together. I realized what it meant. Ah, how I fought!—for your sake, dearest. But I have lost."

She held his hand between both of hers, and spoke caressingly, though impatient with the struggle going on within him:

"Why stop to question? It all knows no logic except the honesty of our feelings towards one another. What would it have meant had you won?"

And leaning forward, she pressed his hand against her cheek.

"How brutally I have stepped into your life!" he managed to say.

She shook her head; and told him sobbingly:

"Before you came I was as blind. Despair did not allow me to lift the veil. You—you made my lying life almost drive me mad. This had to be, or—Oh, I fear to think of it! How I have been punished, dearest, for those years!"

"Horribly punished. Part of our task will be to obliterate the memory of the past."

"Yes," she repeated, "you were my awakening. It seems as if you were destined to appear on the scene." She went on quickly to strengthen his position: "The man I took to myself never dared face the issue. At no time did he think of putting questions so I could have explained my coldness towards him. So I have gone on and on—"

"Tell me what I should do now," he said to halt the painful details.

"Take me with you—anywhere. Let us make a home. For me it will be a fresh start in life. Oh, I will dare look people in the face once more! You believe in me?"

"I love you!"

"I do not falter. And I am not a girl swayed by chance impulse, Alexander."

He leaned forward and kissed her passionately as if to seal the bargain.

For a moment she trembled slightly, while the blood swept over her body. Then her breath came in short gasps. But she gathered herself together, and opening her eyes, looked at him with a smile.

"How beautiful you are!" he cried.

"Let us return to the poems," she said hastily. "You will have to bear with my criticism now."

CHAPTER XIV

DAVID BRONSKI closed the door of the drug-store rather too slowly for his assistant who shivered in the blast of icy air. The bent form shuffled down the street, muttering:

"She's too gloomy, too gloomy. It's too bad. It's too bad."

Then Bronski asked himself, "Why should she not try again? It will occupy her mind; and a few weeks among friends in New York will help her. Unusually gloomy. She was hesitating to leave me. But she must be packing her trunk for that purpose, and will most likely speak of it to-day. She is sure I will let her go. She will ask me, of course. Ah, my! I must let her go."

He sighed.

"Yes, yes. Let her go. Her gloom is painful. She can no longer hide it. If she fails to get a place—? Too bad. She ought to succeed. Was anyone ever kept down in that way? It is criminal! What a cruel world! What a cruel world! It's only a Raman that always finds an excuse for it. She has grown pale of late. She must get out more. She must not brood."

And he threw himself into the dreams of the woman whose hopes he had shared so long. In answer to one doubt, he refused to believe that her success would be his loss. She would not be so lacking in gratitude. He had made her what she was, had given the girl a chance to become a cultured woman, had provided a home, friends,

books—. Of course, there was her ambition. But in time—! And she had prayed so fervently for success that he longed for it as if the gain would have been all his.

As he turned into the quiet street he said, "Why does not anyone come this year? I shall advise her to get up reading circles. That will bring them! Fortunately, now the girl's gone, her mind is partly on her housework. She should have more to do. They do not appreciate her enough here."

He was not surprised to find the shutters of the house closed; but as he threw open the dining-room door to be better able to dispose of his hat and coat on the rack, he stared at the jet of gas burning brightly.

"Called away suddenly," he conjectured. The afterthought was: "She might have telephoned me. Perhaps—"

He went to the foot of the stairs and called her name loudly. There was no answer.

He was troubled, and murmured, "It is odd! It is odd!" Returning to the dining room, he glanced towards the table for a note. "Yes, she—but—" he stammered, and broke off.

Before him lay an envelope addressed to him in her hand.

"Perhaps she was shy of asking me for permission to go to New York," he explained. And putting on his spectacles, he opened the envelope. The note paper was covered with a great deal of writing. A tremor of fright shot through the man. He read:

"David,

"What you will see here may be strange to you; and yet if you have not expected it, you have been blind.

Have you not noticed of late how our relations were disgusting me? Did it escape you? Or did you purposely refuse to see it?

"I think we were wrong in assuming that we could be man and wife. And I believe the world condemned us from the first. If it were honest, ours would have been severe punishment. But I did not need the world to tell me that I stood condemned. My conscience had no need of protest from without.

"What was to be the result? I have taken a step which you will—in your heart—accept as right. I realized at last that I must be free. How long I hesitated to take the step you surely know: you should have seen. And you have always said that we must live as our soul prompts us.

"So I am leaving you. I will hide nothing; I will be honest, because you will only be the more pained when you discover all that has happened. I have met a man whom I have learnt to love,—using the word in the sense that I have found a kinship for him I have never known for any other man. It is with Alexander Raman that I have gone.

"I would have told you all this face to face if I did not fear that you would make a scene. It is best we part good friends. I bear you no grudge for having made bitter some of my best years. And you should be broad enough to look at my action in the right light. You must, else you will be lying to yourself.

"We live our lives for ourselves after all. And I never found the complete sympathy for you I might have had. Our relations were unnatural. I was stifling. It seemed that with time I must go mad.

"It is my hope, David, that our future will be better for this thing. Why cannot it be? . . . "

He read no more. The words blurred before his eyes, and his heart almost stopped beating as he stared at the paper, his breath suspended.

At last came in a choked voice, "Ah! Ah! Ah!" His fingers clutched each other with crushing force.

Though the outer sense was stupefied, his brain worked madly, grasping the incidents, righting them, ordering them; until they stood out sharply, clearly—with maddening clearness.

He straightened up, the sobs ringing in the silent room; and paced the floor until he collapsed in a chair.

For a long time he sat with his head on his breast and eyes closed; but finally reached out for the paper, and reread the words of the first paragraph.

"How was it possible! How was it possible!" was his cry. And reason had to examine the facts anew.

It was growing cold in the room; the neglected furnace gave but little warmth. As he sat shivering, profound pity for himself seized his soul, and his anger against the woman was soon at a white heat.

"I was blind. I did not see it. I was made a fool of. With him!—"

He shook with fury. He cursed the woman. And then he cried like a child that is hysterical after punishment.

The facts came like a thunderclap out of a clear sky to the community. It was Bronski himself who gave them to the world, explosively, and with a show of courage strange to that shrinking nature.

In a twinkling it was the talk of everyone who knew or had heard of Raman or the Bronskis. A few commiserated the deserted husband; many found the matter amusing; many were silent.

The Goldmans were preparing to sit down to dinner when the news was brought them by the younger Goldman.

"We have quite a scandal here now," he announced.

"What is the matter?" was the chorus.

"Mrs. Bronski has run away with Raman."

"Who told you?" "When?" "How is it possible?" "Nonsense!"

The last came from Mrs. Goldman. A red spot flamed in each of her cheeks.

"Who told me?" cried the merchant. "Everybody! I thought you had heard of it. They are talking about nothing else. I would not have expected it of her."

"Why not?" asked his wife sneeringly.

"Well, certainly not of him."

"Bah! There's your high and mighty man!" Mrs. Goldman lost all self-control as she went on. "A perfect man! An ideal man! Like Hindman he considered us not good enough. I don't see why you make such a fuss if you want a husband for Jennie! There's many a poor young man who doesn't walk around with his head high in the air because he has remembered what he has read out of a book. Give one of them the thousands you want to spend on her." She continued in this strain, all listening silently while she berated those whom they had been accustomed to respect.

Suddenly she arose from the table, and left the room.

The parents of Jennie congratulated themselves because Providence had intervened in behalf of their daughter.

Dr. Nast had been startled when his wife, for the first time in her life, burst in upon him as he was attending to a patient.

"I want to see you—downstairs," she managed to get out.

He followed her down to the parlor. After closing

all the doors, she turned to him, and announced in staccato tones:

"Katherine Bronski left her husband."

"Is that so!"

"It is. I do not know how to take it." Her troubled eyes studied the pattern of the carpet.

Suddenly the doctor broke the silence.

"But why has she gone?"

"Why? Because Raman wanted her to. Don't you understand?"

"You didn't mention Raman," he murmured; and presented a very thoughtful countenance to her impatient glance.

"This is all I heard," said the woman. "I am unable to think."

She sat down with a sigh, and after a little interval sighed again. The doctor made as if to leave the room, and his wife asked:

"Well, what do you say?"

"What can I say? I am surprised. That is all I can think of just now." Her stern mien discouraged his smile.

"Katherine will write me, I suppose," she said.

"What will you do then?"

"I cannot tell just now. I will have made up my mind by this evening."

He stole on tiptoe out of the parlor. Mrs. Nast wiped the tears away, and glanced over to the piano. Sighing as if her heart would break, she approached the instrument; and after tenderly striking a chord, she began, in shrieks expressive of pent-up feeling, the song with which she had entertained her guests on the evening of Raman's appearance at her house. Not until hours afterwards did she remark the coincidence.

The details were given to Dr. Hindman by Robinson who, curiously, had been the first to learn them from the deserted husband. The doctor listened without moving a muscle of his face, and yawned when the other had finished.

"You are not surprised?" cried Robinson angrily.

"Surprised? No. In fact I expected it,—for some time."

"You expected it! Are you trying to play at calmness?"

"Why get so excited? Suppose I do say that it surprised me; will that relieve you? You might wish them a pleasant life."

"She ought not to have done it?" cried Robinson glaring at him.

"*You* think she ought not. Suppose you give us your reasons, Mr. Robinson."

"See what it means! I am not narrow—"

"No! No! Who would think of accusing you of such a thing?" said Hindman, lighting a cigarette.

"I don't care if you are ironical. I say again that she ought not to have done it. Had she no restraint? I thought she was possessed of more pride. It was not the way to treat Bronski. He has been good to her—"

For a moment Hindman was impatient.

"To how many women have you been good that you did not marry?" he asked.

"That is nonsense! Sheer nonsense! You are trying to talk from the clouds—"

"Thanks!" And the doctor grinned exasperatingly as he watched the ribbon of smoke curling towards the ceiling.

"You are happy because it will give you a chance to laugh. If you could be honest with me you would admit that she ought not to have done it."

Hindman shrugged his shoulders. Then turning to the other man, he leaned forward and said:

"Suppose she would have been sufficiently interested in *you* to have asked you to take her away from Bronski?"

Robinson sprang to his feet.

"You know what I think of you when you try to make it appear that she forced him to this position!" he cried; and rushed out of the office.

The doctor laughed heartily at the scene. But his thoughts left the angry man to give themselves to the important event of the day. He finished by saying aloud:

"I wonder if it was the best thing for *him?* How much does she 'love' him? I believe he has played the fool! He doesn't know the woman. Of course he was very convenient, very convenient. And the uproar it must have created in New York! If he went there he is very foolish. But if he went there it is because she wants to make a try for the stage again. He is a child; he won't know how to get along with her." Hindman chuckled. "Anyhow, it will be interesting to await the outcome. I see now why his article did not make its usual appearance in the paper. If they have gotten word of it in New York, the opposition papers will be putting it on the front page. I ought to get them."

He stood up, yawned, and putting on his hat and coat, lounged out into the street.

"Hey, Hindman!" called someone loudly.

He turned to find Dr. Ratner moving down upon him as fast as his short legs could cover the ground. Hindman, much vexed, came to a stop, and gazed at the houses on the opposite side of the street.

PART II

WORSHIPPERS

CHAPTER I

THE Ramans congratulated themselves on finding an ideal home location far to the north of the Metropolis,—a suite of rooms that overlooked the river, and bordered a tiny park where children romped on sunshiny days, and men sat gazing out on the opposite bank, heedless of the hours.

At the same time the couple would be out of reach of the interminable roar which the average dweller of the city accepted as a matter of course; so far out of its reach that the clang of an electric car was there unheard.

"Glorious!" Katherine had cried as she mentally filled the empty rooms with furniture. "How did you come to discover it?"

"A family I knew lived next door. But they feared the river on account of their children. That is one of the reasons why we came upon empty rooms here. In time, perhaps, we may also be a little frightened—"

She averted her face. Taking advantage of the janitress' absence from the room, he caught Katherine in his arms, and kissed her passionately.

"Do take care, dear," she said. "The woman might have come in."

The disposal of furniture was a topic for endless discussion. As a rule Katherine had her way, although always ready with a multitude of reasons after each victory. And when they began putting the household

things in place, she went about singing with a light-heartedness that was a joy to the man; and no youthful pair of lovers could have found anything to censure in their conduct.

On the first real evening of leisure they pulled their chairs up to the window to stare out upon the park and the river; and were full of marvellous words for an oil-burning barge whose funnel-belched flames bathed banks and water in yellow light. Their mood knew no rein until a spell of silence brought serious reflections. Raman breathed:

"You have no regrets, dear?"

"Why ask such a question?" she cried. "What should we regret? Surely, surely, this has been our dream! For this we were destined. Oh, the joy of it! the joy of it! Kiss me!" Suddenly she cried out, "They are beneath contempt!"

"What do you mean, dear?" asked Raman, a little startled.

"I was thinking of the ado our enemies are making about it. It almost horrifies me."

"Why, how do you know that they have really given us much attention?" he asked carelessly.

"Did you believe that your haste to hide the papers escaped me?"

"I wish you had left them alone, dear," he groaned.

"What does it matter? But it showed how the conservatives hate you; and I am proud of you, since you must be a foe worthy of their steel."

"Steel! Their weapons are dirty enough!"

"And if this is the state of affairs here, what must it be in the sleepy town we left behind? The hypocrisy of many who always talked of the glory of realizing one's soul, and who will look upon us as criminals! They

won't weigh the circumstances. Ah, Alexander, the people are such liars. Hindman was more right than you, dear, on New Year's eve when he laid on the lash. I enjoyed it, even if—" She broke off, and sighed.

"The past is past," he said soothingly.

"Not for those liars!"

"Remember how hideous their world of reality is to them."

"I should be kinder, perhaps," sighed the woman. "Look what the world meant for me for several years. Think how I suffered! I almost forgive them." She nestled closer to him. "I thought of writing to one person—Mrs. Nast. She loved me. She believed in me."

"Are you not afraid that she would be a little shy of renewing a friendship? Would you rather not burn all your bridges behind you? You may find that what she has to say is painful; or her silence would be painful. In time they will all come back to you. It is all a matter of waiting a little, dear."

"But, Alexander, Mrs. Nast would be just the one to understand such a deed. You remember how she spoke of love that evening? It was fine of a woman who has reached her years. I wonder what middle age will mean for us? We will be close together, so close together! Oh, I am no longer afraid of the years." She mentioned Hindman's name. "He does not lack breadth. He will be just to us."

"Strange how he passed from my mind during the last days!" said Raman. "But why should we care, dear, if some smile, and some accept? For the time being we are living our lives alone." He was thoughtful; then said aloud, "Hindman—my blowing on the embers roused him a little, but the fire is almost dead."

"You think he will consider the action strange in you?" she asked.

"Dear, Hindman was the first one to see the direction affairs were taking."

"Ah! Well, any shrewd observer could have noticed it."

"I must be dull," laughed Raman," for I did not discover it for some time." She playfully pulled his hair. "We are in the confessional now," he said.

"I shall tell you nothing. It will spoil you."

He was once more serious.

"It was an unusual thing we did, Katherine, for unlike the many who accept an action of this sort as a matter of course, ours was a sensitiveness that threatened to defeat the whole thing."

"Yes, but not fear! not fear!" she protested.

"And yet we were both a little frightened at the station. Children! The courage for brave things, even though we know them to be right, is faint in us. Those less sensitive would have cut completely with the past. I must have been as white as you. Anyone could have guessed after a glance at us: at least that was my feeling."

"It must have been the strain of writing to him," Katherine hastened to say. "When I laid down my pen I was limp as a rag. Very strange, for reason spoke in that letter." She broke the silence which followed by saying, "Yes, it was a noble letter." And she repeated it from memory, though he would have wished her silent.

He admitted that it was well composed. "You have the gift for writing."

"Let us not speak of it any more," she said, putting her cheek against his. "We shall be as children."

"Yes, everything is in the building with us!" he cried. "We can be happy to no mean degree. It is morning with us; morning!"

"Ours has been unusually good fortune. Perhaps it is because we demand more of life. Oh! We shall demand all! There shall be no compromise! Think what lies before us!"

And then she spoke of an actress who was returning to New York to stage a new play. "A large force will be required. The play will be a good one. You shall never say that I wanted courage!"

"It is your ambition."

She failed to detect the resignation in his tone, and cried, "Ah! You shall be proud of me! What can they be saying of those last poems—those I must have inspired!"

"New heights indeed! But wait. We shall do English verse together."

She found it important to ask:

"Have you met many who—who spoke to you of this?"

"All seemed desirous of avoiding the subject. I suppose they thought it wiser to let things run their course. But we can expect a visit from any of my friends. They will wish to show that they do not misunderstand me."

"You have no doubts—" she began. He cried:

"How can I have? Wait until you meet them!"

"There is no hurry," she said. "It is hardly possible that we shall tire of each other quickly." He did not join in her laugh. She cried, "Oh, at last I have no fear of loneliness!"

He caressed her with shy intensity.

Under the lamp their remaining hours that evening were spent over Heine.

On the succeeding evenings she had him search out his best among a trunk-full of manuscripts, and listened to his chanting with glowing eyes.

"You have done fine work, fine work," she told him. "Some of it I shall try to turn into English. Perhaps we will get some publisher to take it. Excellent! I will do it."

Her start was deferred— "Until I get the spirit of them;—the spirit of all your work. There is one color always on your palette."

At the end of the week Raman proposed that they break from their isolation by taking advantage of a performance of "Tristan and Isolde." The seats he wished to buy found her asking anxiously:

"Are they within your income?"

"Have no fears. I am doing well," he assured her.

"Oh, what a burden I will be to you until I secure an engagement!" she cried. "My work of the past should not be thrown away. True, I will have but small rôles—"

"Why speak of burdens?" he asked. "It would be absurd if we made any ado over the meum and tuum."

"But it would mean much for me—give me a sense of usefulness."

"Of course it shall be as you wish," he said. "My objection was to your use of the word burden."

She pouted at his frown, and inquired playfully whether he gave himself to these bursts of passion very often. Then she spoke with delight of the promised music-feast, instructing him:

"So always have little surprises for me. I will be as happy as a child."

They went over the libretto of the opera. He pointed out its deficiencies, and spoke of the compensating glorious music.

"My dear teacher," she said, "you have a dull pupil. I will appreciate the poetry much better than the music."

"Wait until you hear it anew," he said, secretly pleased with her annihilation of pride. "One thing,—we shall get a piano. Several friends of ours are excellent artists, and we shall have a string quartet, and singing, and what not."

It made her very happy.

Her handsome attire on the evening of the opera forced him to say:

"The clothes are his. How do you look at it, dear?"

She was also greatly troubled. But with a toss of the head she argued:

"To send them back now would be absurd, and even peculiar. Dare I not say that I earned them?"

His face reflected the scarlet that tinged her cheek. The sudden tears in her eyes brought them into each other's arms.

Their places at the opera satisfied her, partly because under her eyes were assembled personages whose names were of national importance. The glasses in her hand strayed often in their direction, but she spoke contemptuously of the power they represented.

"The pillars of our civilization would be subjects for pity," said Raman with a smile, "if they possessed an atom of conscience."

He buried himself in the music, his hand clasping hers tightly; and he often roused her to beauty of harmony and melody by the pressure of his fingers.

She wondered why Tristan should prove a bad swordsman at a critical period, and why he should require so long a time to die. Isolde's "Liebestod" roused her because of its dramatic power; she was fascinated by the appearance of the heroine towering above the body of Tristan.

Raman's eyes glittered as he turned them upon Katherine.

"Ah, dearest," he said, "you have seen what it meant for two souls. We must be happy!"

"And we have created our world of happiness," she said, thrilling with the moment.

As they were going out, Raman remarked:

"Why wish to achieve more than that in art? One seems to hang in a shower of fire."

"It was wonderful."

They stood in the great thoroughfare of the city, Raman blinking at the real world about him.

"I am glad it is night," he said. "The effect is always marred when I find myself among busy people in the daytime."

"Yes, I know. I have felt the same way." She reminded him: "That dramatic finish!"

He was like a child on their journey home; and when they reached their rooms, embraced her exultantly.

Then he jotted down stray thoughts on paper, while Katherine, crouching before the window, gazed out upon the arc-lights which glistened like stars over the little park.

"Life does not stint its measure in hours like these," she heard Raman say.

She turned pensively towards him. He came to her side.

She interrupted their dream-moments to ask:

"Alexander, why did you come to Philadelphia? Surely you could have worked in a place like this! Was it to escape the many you knew?"

He hesitated before he gave the reasons. His cheeks were aflame.

"How little you could reckon on the uselessness of escape, dear!" she laughed.

"You think it was cowardice?" he asked.

"It depends how beautiful she was," said Katherine with mock gravity. Then growing serious, she cried, "Why cowardice? Ah, Heine is right when he speaks of the gods laughing at us! Except that in our case it was destiny! destiny! Tell me, did she write?"

"Yes; often." The impatience in his voice did not deter her.

"Did you keep any of the letters, dear? Of course not, since you are not a novelist—"

"Some of the letters were so beautiful that I did not hesitate to keep them," he admitted.

"Because they were beautiful? Let me see them, dear. Do!"

Her coaxing succeeded; and he looked them up among his manuscripts. She read the many pages in a low voice. When she finished, she asked:

"Is she beautiful? What a child! Tell me about her."

He did not hesitate to do so.

"Do you know," she said, "I might use these in a novel. Excellent idea! What a romance it would make! And what a hero!"

"No, dear. Let me burn the letters," he urged. "I ought not to have kept them, or even told you of the incident."

"Oh, I believe you were really proud to have touched a heart. Anyhow, the praises there are grand enough for the greatest hero. They belonged to you, every one of them; and I am jealous of the happy way in which she expressed her passion. You might use it in a poetic drama—"

"There is but one poetic drama for us," he broke in. "I could not equal it in imagination. Ah, Katherine!"

Putting back the hair from her forehead, he kissed her.

CHAPTER II

SEVERAL days of the honeymoon were spent in this fashion, until one morning Katherine, after giving unusual attention to her toilet, announced that she was about to begin the rounds of the theatres to see if an engagement could be secured. She gave at some length over the breakfast table her reasons for believing success at hand.

"So you think this is the proper time?" Raman asked with marked hesitation.

"There is always a proper time when we are stubbornly ambitious. I may get a small rôle; but it was with such trifling beginnings that many famous artists proved their worth."

When she had put on her hat, furs, and gloves, and stood before him ready for departure, her hopeful smile made his features relax.

"The coming ordeal does not terrify me," she said. "It might be called an experiment which tests both self-reliance and bravado. I stoop to conquer!"

And with a caress of the man who was gazing vacantly into her face, she departed. Raman, with almost a baffled expression on his face, remained staring at the closed door.

"And yet," he argued, "it is what she ought to do. She wishes to get something for herself by her own efforts; and when I assume it is beyond her power, am I not swayed by the wish? I must not! I must not! It would destroy our peace!"

He wiped the perspiration from his brow, and paced the room with set teeth; but was forced to confess finally:

"If she were to come back and say that she had failed, I would not regret it. Perverse human nature! Is it the fear of losing her? How absurd! I am a child! It were better that she tasted of success. If she loves me—and how can I doubt it?—her wish is to bring me happiness."

To his mind it was dispassionate reasoning; but his pen that morning crawled painfully, often halting in its journey across the paper at smooth places in the article he was getting up; and he scolded every little while without effect.

She returned, and cried breathlessly as she tossed aside her things, "To-morrow is the time! My, but it excited me!"

She sat down beside him and pressed his hand against her cheek while she chattered on.

"So you did considerable work this morning! I wonder if I ever disturb you? I heard that several companies were reorganizing. It is going to be a serious season, a season of ambition for stars. They will return to the absurd next year."

As she prepared the mid-day meal, she sang over the stove; and Raman struggled along with work that rang false, and was valueless.

Suddenly he went to the kitchen.

"Dear," he began, laying his hands on her shoulders, "there is something I wanted to talk over with you." He stopped, confused by her grave eyes; then stammered, "We will wait until we are at table. It will be better then. Yes, it can wait." He kissed her hand.

As he was leaving the room she cried gayly:

"How dare you put on such airs of mystery? Do you

think it will hasten the preparation of dinner?" But her singing mood was gone while she steeled herself for the ordeal she expected.

He was somewhat abashed when he sat down opposite her.

"And now, out with what is disturbing you!" she said. "I am impatient."

"I was thinking that if your company went travelling, you would go also—?"

"Of course." She went on quickly to say, "I can see why it disturbs you, dear. It really ought not. The time away from New York is often not very long. The summer will be ours. Oh, you must trust me! I must have you beautiful to me!"

"Yes, yes!" he said. "Let us not talk any more of it. I am a fool."

"Since we love each other, how can we make much of a problem like this?" she demanded. "Ah, dearest, do not doubt me!"

He could only murmur, "True! True! I have wronged you."

After the meal he proposed a visit to the Art Museum, and thither they went. Katherine exhausted all her adjectives over the "poems in oil"—as she called them. She could not understand Raman's fondness for the plaster casts of the Greek statues.

When they left the Museum they were agreed that it would be of value to go there several times a month. Raman spoke of the abyss that separated the Greek and Mediæval art-worlds.

"And you are intensely Hebraic, are you not?" Katherine said.

"No; although my eclecticism can hardly be defended. Sometimes I feel how much purpose in art

gives it dignity. At other times it seems a tricking of the divine sense of beauty."

"Even Goethe could not be perfectly Greek," she offered as balm, thankful for the phrase that had clung to memory.

"It reminds me that we must read Faust together. I want to discuss it with you."

"Outside of art, dear," she said, "what is there of human effort worth preserving?"

"And so the race perpetuates what is worth remembering through art? Excellent! Only, the quarrel is over what is worth remembering."

And he was jocose with the schools, coloring the flaws, though generous with the underlying elements of truth.

"One thing frightens me," sighed Katherine: "The pictures have seen so much change! Think of the years!"

"It is fortunate that perpetual youth is brought to the making of art."

"Ah, I fear old age," she persisted. "The thought numbs."

"How absurd, when we can stay young, dear!"

That evening they were startled by a rap on the door.

"Who can it be?" wondered Katherine. Her curiosity gave way to distress when she heard Raman exclaim:

"Why, it's Rudov and the doctor!"

Two men entered. One, whom the poet introduced to his wife as Dr. Burovsky, was short, fair-haired, and nervous; the other's great head, crowned by curling black hair, towered in the air, and went with a phlegmatic temperament that loved its ease.

"The so-called 'Inseparables,' dear," laughed Raman. "No two men ever had more to quarrel over between themselves."

"Their names are not unfamiliar to me," said Katherine.

"Is there a Jewish workingman in the Middle States who does not know you, Rudov?" Raman asked proudly.

"Ah, I wonder if my mother—may she rest in peace!—would have forgiven her son, destined to be a wonderful rabbi, for becoming a labor-leader?" came with a great laugh.

"What could she understand by the word labor-leader?" cried the doctor. "Let her sleep in peace."

"I suppose the same may be said of your individualism," said Rudov, turning to him.

"If it would only not let you sleep in peace," the doctor laughed.

"He wants to be told that it don't," said Raman, slapping him on the back.

When they were seated the doctor cried, "Before anything, you want to hear Rudov's new joke."

"Ah, of course!" Raman said; and added: "It is sure to be on himself."

"Certainly," came from the labor-leader. "And when I call it a grave joke, I am conscious that only an American could catch the pun. Well,—"

"Just a moment," broke in Katherine. "I want to get tea; but I can follow your story from the kitchen, Mr. Rudov. Excuse me."

Both the visitors had used the opportunity for a brief study of the woman whose escapade with their friend was the talk of the town.

"It is this," began Rudov. "I had to speak at a mass-meeting where a strike of the jacket-makers was to be discussed. It so happened that I was not feeling well; and in the close room my head soon seemed ready to burst. Sitting next to Jadrer—the secretary of the

union—I mentioned the fact. He grew serious. 'Don't die,' he said; 'we can't spare you.' 'And if I do die?' I asked, knowing that he liked to talk. 'Ah, Rudov, what a funeral we would make for you!' 'Nonsense!' I said. 'I don't believe it.' 'No nonsense about it!' he cried. 'We shall have eight horses on the hearse; and every union in our end of the town will turn out in white gloves.'—Think of them in white gloves!— 'And we shall have an A-1 band. Ah, Rudov, money would be no consideration! It would be in every newspaper—' 'Say, Jadrer,' I whispered, 'try to get twenty dollars together, I must pay rent, and haven't a cent.' He looked at me as if I was crazy. 'You know they can't spare it,' he said with anger. That was the joke, the grave joke."

Katherine could be heard laughing.

She appeared with the tea.

"I am glad we have got you back again, Raman," said the labor-leader as he helped himself to the sugar.

"Perhaps you think I am happy to be reading some of the newspapers here instead of in Philadelphia," came with surprising bitterness.

"Why speak of their vileness?" murmured the doctor.

"Ah, I would not. But these last days—! Will they never cease?" Raman's eyes flashed as he said, "I never dreamt that I could hate them so intensely."

"You saw some people we knew in Philadelphia," Rudov made haste to change the subject. "What of Hindman?"

"He gave me a warm welcome," said the poet.

"A warm welcome, eh?" Burovsky cried with scorn. "What use had he for you of all men? But don't speak of him! Don't! I am ashamed to think that he boasted

at one time of my influence in his life. See what he is now! He never mentioned me, I suppose."

"No," admitted Raman.

"No, I suppose not. The day was when he was proud of me,—as I was of him. Bah!" His gesture of disgust showed that his hand was trembling.

"You think his taking up with medicine hurt him?" asked Katherine.

"You forget, dear," smiled Raman, "that our friend here is a fighter even if he has a D—r before his name."

"But you must remember that Hindman is an individual of peculiar character," she argued.

"I suppose that is his defence too," said the doctor. "Ah, well! We won't talk about ghosts. Only, when they laugh, it hurts. I thought of going to Philadelphia. But why should I?" He shook his head sadly.

Rudov rubbed his white, graceful hands, and said in silken tones, "Ah, you needn't despair. Watch how events will carry him to us. With the awakening of the worker to political class-consciousness, Hindman will be where he can direct his energies into a useful channel."

"I do not deny that he can become dishonest," cried the doctor. "And then he will go to you. But you will be disappointed! Mark my word! I am certain that he is no more the man he was. Raman, you have seen him again. Although you will hesitate to speak unkindly of him, tell us the truth. I ask it."

"I will," said the poet after a brief struggle. "Our friend Rudov forgets that when a man laughs too long at things which at one time appealed to him, his period of usefulness is over."

"I told you! I told you!" cried Burovsky.

"At one time—and that not long ago—," continued

Raman, "I thought his doubting period might not last—"

"You spoke of it to me," said Katherine.

"Yes, I remember. But at this distance I can see the effect of the last years on Hindman more clearly. I feel now that I was wrong."

"Of course! Of course!" cried the irate doctor. "There have been times of late when he should have spoken. It was his duty, if any man's. Well, he was silent. You Socialists can have him! In your ranks he will want to be carried on the shield. Bah!"

"We will find a mechanical way of having that done without degrading anyone," said Rudov softly.

"You grieve because he makes no use of his ability? Or because he has turned his back on the beliefs you have instilled?" asked the poet, at a loss for words kindly to Hindman.

"Because he is no more a man!" was the bitter reply.

"And yet if he were to accost you suddenly and put out his hand, Burovsky, you would not have the heart to upbraid him," insisted Raman.

"Yes, it is true: I care much for him."

"Why" interposed Katherine, "do we keep our conversation devoted entirely to him? No doubt he is worthy of being discussed. But remember that he has gone out of our lives."

"Perhaps it is unwise to rake up the past," admitted the doctor. "But you must remember that to us he meant much. It was a comradeship that—as our poet here would put it—built above the very stars. Our lives were devoted to the men and women about us. We had in view big things which required the coöperation of every strong man. It is true that I am an individualist, and Rudov and Mr. Raman collectivists, but we can join

hands at times, since the immediate demand is to arouse the drowsing masses. And even if Hindman went with them I might reconcile myself to it. But he could never do it and be honest. It is that which makes me grieve."

"He is not happy," said Katherine.

"He does not deserve to be! But let us put it aside. Our conversation has indeed danced too much about that man."

"The world has receded far from him, is the way it appeared to me," said the poet.

"A sort of pessimism, eh?" remarked the labor leader.

"No," said the doctor. "He is simply dead. Why give names to a dead man? Poor fellow."

"Ah! Nothing but your cause!" Katherine cried in protest.

"Yes, our cause, Mrs. Raman. That gives me a decent excuse for living, Raman a decent excuse for writing, Rudov for talking."

"At least speak well of the cake," she laughed, pushing it towards him.

It sufficed to turn the interest of the men upon her. Rudov asked her impressions of New York, as if ignorant of her former residence in the city, which had been spoken of in the opposition press.

She incidentally mentioned the visit to the museum, and dwelt on the work of the masters, running through their names with an ease that boasted knowledge.

"You don't know what dangerous ground you are treading," cried Rudov. "It will likely precipitate the doctor into a denunciation of our art-life. He will tell you—if *I* may be brief—that our present art is merely for the artist,—a sort of tricking and tickling of the soul; he will use hard names—as, for instance, 'The parasitism of the entertainer'; and will tell you that no honest

man would try to make a living out of his art at the present time. Have I been fair, Burovsky?"

"Very fair," said the doctor with a nod; "very fair for a man who can listen for four hours of three thousand six hundred seconds each to Wagner."

Thus launched, the talk rambled sufficiently to please Katherine. Her carefully-phrased opinions, however, did not produce the impression on which she had counted, and she abandoned the field with ill-grace.

Suddenly Burovsky said to Raman:

"Your poetry is getting a little above us, my friend,—has the tricks of the English rhymsters and grinders-out of jelly covered words. Are we losing you? Your articles continue to be a source of pleasure to me."

"Don't listen to him," dissented Rudov. "You are educating the workers. Proof? Your audience is increasing. You are lifting them to you. Burovsky, why cannot you believe that beautiful things are of just as much importance, even if they do not scratch their heads and look wise."

"Raman," the doctor pleaded, laying his hand on the poet's shoulder, "give us your first notes, those lines which bespoke the simple heart. Why this complexity? If Yiddish has a mission, it is to appeal in full to the unsophisticated ones who know the language."

"He has evolved!" cried Rudov. "You want him to stand still? And if he gave you the first notes now, you would be secretly saying, 'Will the man never learn anything new?—never graduate from the sweat-shop?'"

"Won't you let me say a word for myself?" began the poet with a smile.

"Not one," said Burovsky. "In art you have a way of making black white that doesn't please me."

"It is not too late in the evening for some of that

very bad art," said Rudov, looking at his watch. "What have you done the last days, Raman? It ought to be interesting;"—with a smile at Katherine whose eyelids lowered a little. "But you must hold your peace, doctor."

Raman yielded to the entreaties of both men; and as Burovsky was more an admirer of the "evolved" poet than he cared to admit in a guarded moment, the time drifted away quickly, Katherine listening in silence to the comment, and wondering at the unstinted praise. "It surely must seem flat to him," she told herself.

The visitors took themselves off with promise of a similar evening in the near future.

"What splendid fellows!" cried Raman when he returned from accompanying them to the door.

"Only that they loom very important in their own eyes," said Katherine. She added as an afterthought, "It was unnecessary for Burovsky to talk that way in public about Hindman."

"He could be open. We are all close friends. Believe me, they are noblemen in every sense of the word. You will learn to like them, Katherine."

"It is possible," she said dryly.

"To them there is no doubt that you are Mrs. Raman."

"How do you know what they think of this? They may care enough for your company and good opinion to come here—"

"Dearest, you are tired," he said.

She gathered herself together with an effort.

"Yes, I suppose it is that," she said, smiling a little. And then she cried passionately, "Alexander, don't have any people come here. I can't bear them!" and threw herself into his arms.

He looked into her face wonderingly, unable to frame a reply.

CHAPTER III

THE Ramans took part of their journey downtown next morning together, the woman cheerful and talkative, the man completely engrossed in her. When he roused himself sufficiently to look about the surface car, Raman discovered an acquaintance to whom he bowed in friendly fashion. Following the direction of his eyes, Katherine flushed to the roots of her hair, and grew silent.

Some distance before her destination she got to her feet. Her hasty word of parting to her husband as she left the car made him stare a little.

He pointed to the empty seat as he called, "Roseblitt!" and the man whom he had greeted came to his side and shook hands.

"I am sorry that I could not make use of the opportunity to introduce you to my wife," said the poet. He was surprised to hear:

"Oh, I knew Mrs. Raman when she was Miss Katherine Berno. I must have changed, or she would have known me. In fact we were well acquainted in the old days."

He was a colorless, carefully-attired man of thirty, with well-formed features devoid of interest.

"How are things with you?" Raman inquired.

"Fairly well. My law practice is extending. When you have a chance, come down to my office. It's quite near your newspaper." He gave the poet one of his cards, and went on to say, "I am getting quite a name

now, thanks to hard work. Many of us want that, Raman, your ideal views to the contrary notwithstanding."

"You have entered politics, I hear,—far, far away from our end of it."

"According to my lights. I will go to the Assembly if things keep on. We each have our bit of work to do. You are doing yours well. I sometimes hear of you."

"Often?" asked the poet with a smile.

"N—no. My work carries me where yours don't. I wish you would look at it in the right light. You always were willing to put yourself into the other fellow's place to see things. I meet many of the old chaps"—the word hung loosely in the sentence—"who believe that I ought to have stuck to the old ideas."

"You were not made for them, else you would have stuck." The lawyer failed to detect any sarcasm. "You will succeed, I am sure."

"Yes, I think I will." And apologetically: "We need the conservative element, Raman; so you won't go too fast, you know."

"There is no danger of their disappearing too quickly," said the poet with a shrug.

At parting Raman proved friendly, the other man very urbane.

"Let me see," mused the poet; "where have I heard his name lately? and in what connection?" The question was insistent enough to worry him until he found the answer. "Ah! Yes!" he cried as he stood on the steps of the newspaper office. "That is the man she knew, on account of whom—Oh, Hindman must have let his imagination run away with him! So that is why she left the car ahead of her corner!"

The events of the evening before trooped back to irritate him.

"I ought to have asked her before I invited Burovsky and Rudov. But who would have thought that she would be so sensitive about the step we took! The newspaper talk must have worried her. And then the men seemed to slight her a little. She is so human! so human! She tries again to-day—" He sighed; and then scolded himself.

Katherine was very dispirited when they met over lunch. She asked ill-humoredly:

"Well, what did that Roseblitt have to say?"

"The average fellow," Raman answered carelessly: "He boasted that he was doing well, and excused himself for being able to state such a fact; and asked me whether I couldn't be fair with a conservative. He mentioned that he knew you years ago."

"Yes, and I never liked him. He was, and must be still, an awful fool."

"If he had only been a bit of a fool he might not be flirting with political ambition and rascals."

"You say he is getting along?"

"He told me that he expects to go to the Assembly. He'll climb."

Katherine hastened to say, "How I detested him in the old days! And he stands out as the most unpleasant person I met then. It was to miss an exchange of words with him that I left the car."

"How nonsensically sensitive you are!" he laughed, mindful of the preceding evening. And then he said seriously, "I suppose you will make another trial of it, dear."

"Of course. Oh, but you should have seen the line of applicants! Where do they come from? Many are poorly dressed; and most of them seem devoid of intelligence. One wonders what they could do with a rôle.

They must look upon it merely as a means of gaining a livelihood. What else can it be, dear?"

He accepted the opportunity:

"The ambition for applause from the other side of the footlights. What else? In that case it happens to be immediate recognition of one's ability to play a part aside from our regular one. And we are very hungry for applause."

She flashed him a quick look, and said quietly:

"I am glad that you recognize the hunger for applause to be a universal failing. Otherwise some of us might appear absurdly ambitious."

Her earnestness left him silent, although he considered her view of his statement as a step of adjustment, and was grateful. On reconsideration he decided:

"It is with myself that I must fight this out. She is fair enough."

So he contested every inch of ground with himself, and imagined that the hours went by more smoothly. At times he felt vaguely that the magic circle she had drawn about her ambition would have to be crossed, since her lack of success was driving her to despair. But he reasoned that she had met failure before in not very desperate fashion, and that matters would adjust themselves.

During one of these days, close to evening, an unexpected visitor opened their door, and greeted them with lofty good-will. Dr. Hindman stood smiling before them, pleased with their warm welcome.

"Ah, but you are comfortably fixed," he said while pulling off his coat. "An excellent location, with that park and the river. Well, how are you?"

"Happy, cheerful, careless," enumerated the poet.

"Ideal! But then I am dealing with ideal people."

"We simply refuse to have it otherwise," laughed Katherine.

"Now you are boasting," warned the doctor.

"And what could have induced you to come to New York?" Katherine asked, "Are we really the honored ones?"

"Partly." Hindman seated himself, and continued, "It has been so long since I saw the old town and my active friends that I thought to kill many birds with one railroad ticket. Ah, what a spell the place casts over me! I was unlike my regular self the moment I stepped off the ferry-boat. I know you will be advising me to stay here for all time if that is the case." His laugh lacked heartiness.

"It is so close to supper," said Raman glancing from the clock to Katherine, "that we might as well have it now. It will help the doctor talk."

"You don't dine out?" asked Hindman.

"Can't you smell the delightful odors reaching us from the kitchen?" the poet cried. "It shows what a cook Katherine is."

"He means his big appetite forgives and forgets my deficiencies," she said with the merriest laugh Raman had heard from her in days. "But suppose you take the doctor into your workshop, Alexander, while I attend to things here. I won't be long."

Hindman followed the poet out, turning over for examination the display of conjugal happiness; but he could not decide that it was for the purpose of forcing upon his attention something of which he would speak on his return to Philadelphia; Raman would hardly prove good actor enough.

He was silent when he looked about him in the well-ordered study. After glancing at some of the books, he

went to the window from which he gazed absently on the river.

"You might have made a home," said Raman, divining what was passing in his mind.

Hindman turned upon him with anger.

"Nonsense! How long have you tried this?—a couple of weeks? Huh!" To make amends he hastened to explain, "And then I am not you. Don't you see it's a different problem entirely when I'm concerned?" He sat down and surveyed Raman with some interest. "Well, shall I tell you the pleasant things they are saying about you in Philadelphia?"

"I am not anxious to know. And, Hindman, please do not speak of it to Katherine. If she asks, make it brief."

"All right. It wouldn't be worse than the newspapers, though."

"How long do you intend to stay in New York?"

"Oh, a day; not more than that."

"Well, we will have that couch fixed up. It can be made comfortable. Don't refuse."

"I won't," said the doctor. "Tell me, have you seen Burovsky lately?"

Katherine appeared, and informed them that supper was waiting.

At the table Hindman repeated his question.

"Yes," said the poet. "He was here with Rudov."

"Is it to see Burovsky that you came?" asked Katherine with the ghost of a smile.

"Well, I will see him—I suppose." And Hindman looked questioningly at the woman.

"Why?" she asked, only to regret her temerity.

"Why? Because—" The doctor stopped; then asked in a strained voice, "I ought not?" He followed it ex-

plosively with, "Surely he could not have been so harsh!"

Katherine looked appealingly to her husband. He said:

"You must remember that Burovsky demands much of friendship. You ought to know him!"

"Friendship!" cried the doctor bitterly. "What does he expect of it? That we never waver in our belief? That we should sacrifice everything? He could never see the limitations to it! Well?—and Rudov?"

"He thinks that when the time speaks, you will come with us," said Raman.

"Rudov," said the doctor slowly, "is a big man: patient, far-seeing—"

"And willing to forgive much," added Raman, smiling.

"He is always considerate," was the way Hindman met the implication.

"Which of the two is your greater friend?" Katherine cried indignantly.

"If I may speak for him," said Raman: "he who exacts less."

"Burovsky," complained the doctor, "dins too shrilly. He is considered broad because he is at odds with so many things. At one time it fascinated me.—Anyhow, I now consider him narrow, in a great many ways,—like your friends in Philadelphia."

"And what have they said?" asked Katherine. "I cannot believe that we are of importance enough to engage their attention all this while. Haven't they forgotten us?"

"Dear,—" began Raman dissuadingly.

"Why should I not know? It will show me what they are. At one time they insisted that they were my friends."

"Friends!" growled the doctor. "What use have you for such a word at this time? Confound the social instinct!"

"I shall write Mrs. Nast. I ought to have done so," said Katherine, and fearfully watched the doctor's face.

"Well, of Mrs. Nast I do not know. I have not seen her. She is so romantic, it ought to appeal to her. It hasn't to Bronski. I heard he was heart-broken."

"One of us two had to be." And Katherine drew a deep breath.

"Of the others, what is there to say?" continued Hindman, despite the poet's injunction. "Those whom you would expect to take a philosophic stand are silent. And the small people are exultant. I suppose they said everything about it that could be said. I wonder the debating societies have not taken it up for discussion. But you should have expected that."

Katherine snapped her fingers contemptuously, and glanced at her husband. His assumed lack of interest encouraged her to a resumption of her ordinary dignity.

Hindman looked forward with too much misgiving to his next visit to find entertainment in their talk. Prejudiced by bitterness, he gave himself to a careful study of man and wife, and was soon able to tell himself with some satisfaction, "They are posing. She is beginning to calculate already. He is blind."

At eight he left them. When the pair were alone, Raman caressed the woman who struggled with her sobs. She broke forth:

"What reptiles! Surely, surely they will sometimes be afflicted in some way that they may hunger for sympathy! Not a bit of pity!—"

"Yes,—for the world's small woes. But, dear, why

should we consider their lapse into inconsistency strange ? Try to preserve a little self-command."

"Did I not before Hindman ? " she inquired, straightening up at once.

"Remember that we are being studied."

They sat for some time silent, she with her hands covering her face, and her elbows on the table, a prey to conflicting emotions ; he with curious eyes bent upon her, trying to fathom her abstraction.

He roused her with :

"Suppose we wash the dishes. I'll do the drying. Hindman will be surly when he comes back from his friendly talk ; and I want you to put me in the mood to smooth out his woes."

"Friends ! " she exclaimed fiercely. "One is a fool to expect anything more than entertainment from them. Hindman is not always a fool ! "

"But see how he has hurried off to Burovsky."

She got to her feet with a sigh.

Hindman came back at a late hour, so shattered, that to the poet it seemed as if some horror had crushed out his man-nature.

"I will go to sleep at once," the visitor said curtly. "I am very tired, as you see. I know you are curious as to how I spent my evening. But there's no use talking of it. For one thing it might wake up Mrs. Raman."

"Oh, the walls are thick. Come ! Feel that you have not fared badly here. What if Burovsky has built his life into a certain pattern ? You can still be friends. He is not so hard. But you must have acted foolishly to-night. You ought not to have gone with the idea that you were to meet an issue."

"Don't talk about it. It has all crumbled away." And Hindman paced the floor as he continued with anger: "I should have expected it. Why should we go out of our way for other people who have nothing in common with us? It is best to ignore them, to put them aside. You will say that such a thing is not pleasant. Perhaps my attitude of hostility towards men who plan is not pleasant. Anyhow, I refuse to be dictated to by Burovsky, or anyone else. You think I was hurt? Why did I go to him? I was in the grip of a mood that is like the strange feeling which sometimes comes upon us, and makes us feel that life meant much more years, years ago, and yet calm reason refuses to credit it." He had stopped in his walk, and was staring at Raman without seeing him. "I was a child. Huh!" Rousing himself, he cried, "Of course you too believe I should go back to the old basis of making a noise in the world." The plea was pathetic in its appeal for some vindication of his course during the last years.

"Hindman, I won't say what you would want me to say. As for Burovsky, he cares for you as for no other man—"

"What about his closeness to Rudov?" Hindman interposed.

"You ought to understand that what he finds most attractive in Rudov is the opportunity offered for endless debate. But we will have no deficiencies in those we have taught to fight, and whom we have learnt to love."

"But," cried the other resentfully, "don't you see that he accepts as invaluable, as first principle, a conception of duty that to me is not logically vital? Goodness me, must we cringe before our friends if they find cause to differ with us? But that's all! I'll have no

more of it! That's at an end! You had better go to bed."

He glanced at the carefully prepared couch, and was interested enough to ask of Raman, who was poking at the fire in the little stove:

"Well, how do you find things? Are you happy?"

"Yes, even though it is our period of adjustment."

"Period of adjustment—?"

"Oh, I was trifling with the word. I used a term belonging to your real world."

"So she still wants to go on the stage?"

"Oh, yes." Raman's composure was inscrutable. "You know that it means wonderful things to her. She has built much on it. A praiseworthy ambition."

"It is a mistake," came promptly. And the next moment Hindman turned to see if the door leading into the bed-room was closed. "But of course as long as you are satisfied—" He finished with a shrug.

"I am not dissuading her. Good-night. I hope you will sleep well."

Hindman gave the poet a searching look, opened his mouth to speak,—and only said, "Good-night."

Raman heard him pacing his room with nervous strides.

"What is left him?" he mused pityingly.

CHAPTER IV

THE doctor was still asleep when Raman went down to the newspaper office. He was gone when the poet returned. The mention of his name was sufficient to arouse Katherine who had been idly glancing over the pages of a magazine.

"I was glad to get rid of him. What a child he is! What a weakling! You never saw such a man! He was on the verge of tears several times when he spoke to me, and I was so angered that I could have laughed. It was a revelation to me of his character. I never knew before what a feeble, useless, miserable individual he was. Don't speak for him! No amount of philosophizing could rid me of my disgust. I hope I will never see him again."

"I suppose he intended to stay in town a few days," said Raman, drawing a seat near her; "but Burovsky spoiled it all. No doubt he went there with a great show of dignity, and it angered the older man. It is not likely you will see him again if you stay in New York."

"And you are not likely to go to Philadelphia," she said, and arose to set the table.

"No, not for some time."

While they were over their meal, Katherine suddenly laughed. In answer to her husband's glance of inquiry, she said:

"You remember when I told you of the girl who fell in love with Hindman, and who was dissuaded from pushing her intentions too far?" He nodded. "Well, the

girl came to me about that time, and made me a confidante, for the idiotic reason that she thought I was interested in Hindman!" Katherine shook with laughter. "Did you ever hear of anything more naïve? It would be considered too improbable in a story of real life. What could have given her the idea? I suppose because he visited us often then. I set her mind entirely at ease, and told her unreservedly what I thought of the gentleman."

The next day Katherine went on her usual journey to the theatres; only to return with an ebb of spirits that left her in a state of collapse. She moved about the rooms silently, replying in monosyllables to Raman's questions, and keeping out of his way. He became restless and unnerved, and the hours were left bare of work. For a time he was tactful enough to keep his peace; but the persistency of her dejection urged him to suggest a visit to one of his friends that evening. Supper until then had been uneventful.

"We are sure to find pleasant company at Danvitz's, and music. He will be delighted to have us," Raman told her. "You have time to dress."

Her refusal was peremptory.

"If you wish to go—" she began with a flash of anger; but paused, and went on buttering her bread as if outside of that there was little of interest in the world.

"No, I do not wish to go," he said quietly.

When they arose from the table he reminded her of her intended letter to Mrs. Nast. Visibly brightened, she prepared to write it. A little later she gladdened the man by entering his study, and asking for some of his poems.

"I promised long ago to render them into English," she said.

His hands trembled with joy as he selected a few at random, and kissed her.

"You have set yourself a hard task," he warned. "Have patience."

She devoted several hours to one poem that seemed best suited for translation, only to find the uncouth results dismaying. A little weary, she said in disgust, "It is a question if he has gotten anything here really of much account. It may sound well in Yiddish. That ought to be the test—the turning of it into another tongue."

Raman, happy as a lark that she had fallen upon something which might pleasantly occupy her mind, rummaged among his papers, and went to her with several examples of his best work. He found her idle; and a glance at the confusion of words on several papers explained the situation.

"Those are weak lines, dear," he said gently. "Here is something that promises better."

"Y—yes," she admitted after reading it. "But how could you guess it was better adapted for the purpose? I can see it only after my struggle with the other."

"You will find it much the stronger poem," he said, and left her, his cheerfulness entirely dissipated.

She laid down her pen, and leaning back in her chair, gave herself to the morning's unsuccessful search for an engagement. In a few moments her thoughts were remote from the manuscripts he had turned over to her. She laid her head on the table, and groaned as if her heart would break.

For a long time she sat as if in a stupor; but suddenly got to her feet. Her restless pacing of the room reached her husband's ears. At once his work ceased, and he went to her. She eyed him dully; and Raman, checking

the words which were on his lips, found a pretext for his intrusion.

As he was about to return to his work, she said with a sudden lift of the head, "It is late."

He started, for in the words—even though stifled to a breath,—rang jealousy.

"In a moment," he managed to say. "I will turn out the light in my room."

When he reached it, he stood stock still for a few seconds, a numbing feeling at heart, and the echo of the words loud in his brain. Try as he might to deride the idea, it persisted.

He fought it during part of a wakeful night with the determination to root out everything of selfishness which might threaten the woman's peace of mind. It did not promise a satisfactory solution to the somewhat cleared brain of the morning; but he set himself the task of entertaining her.

The days that followed proved to him the uselessness of pitting his efforts against her despondency.

He prepared for a long siege, fortified by his love; but he fell upon one evening that threatened to rob him of all courage.

He had been working upon an article for his newspaper with application that was heedless of the hours, and he forgot to smile into the frowning face of the woman who was sitting at the window. She was dividing her attention between the monotony of the scene without, and his absorption which seemed oblivious of all things except the square of paper, his pen, and the inkstand.

Jealously she watched him, her wretchedness flinging space terrifyingly between them, until her resentment drove her from the room that she might not make an open display of it.

Late that night he threw aside his pen; and after reading the accumulated thought with rising satisfaction, suddenly remembered that Katherine had stolen out some time before.

"It was certainly good of her not to disturb me," he reflected. "This is the best thing I have done in a year."

The faint gaslight in the bedroom illuminated the face of the woman. As he bent over to kiss it, he recoiled at the evident signs of weeping. She sighed, and the white arms moved nervously over the coverlet.

Raman stared at her, bewilderment giving way to anger. Thoughts darted rapidly in each other's wake. His shoulders bent discouragingly under the discovered burden.

He began to question his knowledge of the woman, and ran rapidly over the past weeks, only to find that the value of the human hours was destroyed by her complete separation from him in matters that demanded the slightest sacrifice on her part.

So he stood for some time, answering chance sigh with sigh, until he groaned helplessly, and prepared to sleep. In the morning Katherine was too engrossed with her own affairs to give any attention to his unusual quietness.

One evening at supper a few days later she was seized with sudden faintness, and in explanation revealed something which made him cry out jubilantly, "Dearest! Dearest!"

"No! No!" she said, repulsing him as he was about to embrace her. "No! It can't be Alexander! It musn't be! What a burden it would mean for both of us. No, Alexander." She suddenly put her arms about him, and whispered, "Some time in the future. Not now."

Freeing himself, he protested ; but she was inexorable. He grew stern ; and she answered him with logic that he was forced to fight warily, until he gave way to impatience.

" You are a child," she scolded. " In you are all the prejudices you make such an ado about. God in heaven ! is there not enough misery in life that we must find partakers of it ? "

He pursued the topic no further in the face of her heated opposition. Grief and anger drove him to ask himself why she took that stand ; and gave answer : " She prefers to be free to pursue her ambition. With that as her goal, nothing else will count."

The next time they were together he looked at her closely.

" What is the matter, Alexander ? " she asked.

" Nothing."

In reality her face did not appear to be the same to him, although he could not explain wherein the difference lay.

CHAPTER V

LIVING expenses became a considerable factor in ordering the poet's work, and the hours which he could spare for the woman were not as numerous nor as light-hearted as he might have wished. Katherine shunned his study, found only trifles of interest when they were thrown together, and gave herself to books with an absorption which allowed her to disregard the man. In excuse she soon saw it necessary to tell him :

"I do not want to be in your way. You have your work to do, and must concentrate your attention upon it. I do not understand why you hesitate to tell me when I disturb you."

"But you do not in my leisure moments," he protested. "In fact you are a help, and your word of encouragement allows me to command greater effort. Do not cut yourself off from my work like this. I want to share it with you : to have you pass upon it, and to take delight in anything I may do that is of merit. Just as you, dearest, would divide with me any honors that came to you."

The last was sufficient to create for her the picture of the world at her feet and this man beside her sharing in the homage ; and she turned critical eyes upon him. Shame made her hastily say :

"You must forgive my gloom, Alexander. Surely you have learnt to know me ! You do not doubt," came fearfully, "that we are close to each other ? You must

remember that life is just beginning to teach me things. It meant so little before."

Striving to grasp her meaning, he could only say, "You are lonely."

"No! No! If your thought is to bring people here, I will repeat that I do not want them. Why shouldn't we be strong enough to dream alone?"

Ignoring the importance of evening-quiet for studious work, Raman induced the woman to take long walks. The return journey was always accomplished in silence, unless the poet chose to overlook her irritability born of weariness, and found a pretext for conversation.

She had an aversion for those theatres which she had visited in search of employment, and only consented to go to a performance when the playhouse was not on her list of failures. He hastened to secure the tickets.

"A problem play," he told her. "And the interpreter ought to please you, dear. You will understand her art better than I."

"I don't rave over her, having never proved to my satisfaction that she was an artist. But I shall enjoy the drama. It will help me: I go to-morrow for the last time to see about an engagement, but only because it is the last opportunity. Hindman would like the play." She allowed herself the luxury of a smile.

"Yes, our Scandinavian master is the doctor's favorite. Do you remember that day when I met you coming from the library?"

No, she did not remember; and went on speaking of the play and the actress until he discerned that her criticism of the latter had envy at its root.

"Does failure always embitter?" he asked himself sadly.

At the performance Katherine found herself held by the development of the story. Between the acts she

listened patiently to Raman's exposition of the vital points of the play, and was interested in the tricks aiding situation and character which he made luminous.

"I have been with Danvitz at rehearsals, and have seen him suggest apparently trifling points that lifted the whole episode. Why will you not go when something of his is performed? At least have him down to the house. His simplicity is delightful."

A sudden flash of good humor found her consenting to receive him.

When they left the theatre she urged him to write a play. He spoke of the difficulties.

"Don't you see, dear, that anything serious I might accomplish, no matter how good, would be as brutally treated as you are? To worry and fuss over it, and then have it fill some space among old manuscripts! I might essay something in Yiddish."

She would not hear of it.

"When will you think of appealing to the bigger circle?" she cried. "In English your audience is vast, and keen for the finest things."

She continued in the same strain until they entered a café for some wine.

"I am afraid we could not spend many evenings in the week in this fashion without worrying about our purse," she remarked; and then she leaned forward to whisper, "Do not do it hurriedly, but look at that pretty girl to your right, in the corner. She was talking to me the other day while in line, and told me quite a story of her struggle to get an engagement, and was desperately in need of money. Her companion is intoxicated, you notice."

Raman mused over the details until he was furious with the certainties that spoke in every action of the girl who was laughing wildly into the drunken eyes.

"For her, life is damnably real," he said in a subdued voice. "What madness! Can she not see the end that looms clear? What queries rise out of the depths into which she is sinking! Afraid to do work that might be called undignified, and yet resorting to this! She may lack every necessary qualification for success on the stage."

"It is her own affair," said Katherine quickly.

"I won't admit it."

They wandered through the surging crowd on Broadway where faces produced a feeling akin to awe in the poet.

"The net is so finely woven that superb strength is required to break through it;—as the master has shown in the play."

"You shall set to work to-morrow to write one yourself," she commanded.

He laughingly consented to talk over a certain combination of circumstances with Danvitz, and to secure his opinion.

The playwright visited them during the week. Katherine recognized the tall, well-formed man, whose massive, bearded head and keen eyes had clung to her memory though she had not seen him for several years.

He talked jestingly while taking stock of the woman, and his ponderous laugh did not seem to know a care. When Raman made mention of a subject for a play and outlined the story, the visitor shook his head.

"You ought to know perfectly well that you won't get a hearing for such a 'heavy' plot, unless you should wish to twist it out of shape. Don't forget it is a business proposition with the manager; and really, though it would be first rate for our Yiddish stage, it would not suit the average-minded American. Try it in Yiddish, Raman. I shall see that it is put on. It is interesting.

However did you manage to get the world's two and two together so unshrinkingly ?"

"But," Katherine ventured to say, "if the play should have an element of humor it will work out well and an American audience might like it."

"Aside from the fact that Mr. Raman would refuse to indulge in jokes at the expense of the play, there is to be considered the divergence of opinion in necessary quarters as to that word interesting."

He continued to throw cold water on her project until she fumed inwardly ; and her dissatisfaction was complete when Raman consented to try the play in Yiddish.

With smiling eagerness Danvitz called for the lines the poet had done during the last weeks. He lifted his eyebrows at their paucity, and scolded :

"You are giving too much time to prose. If you would realize how you ease many of us of the tension of a problem-sickened world, you would never dare to do it."

Katherine was at a loss how to stand before this man to gain praise. His simplicity did not appeal to her, nor his boundless good-humor. She wondered how he had managed to create noteworthy plays. Her husband at least openly revealed a temperament equal to such work.—(She had once said that "thought sat enthroned on his lineaments.")—But this man seemed put up on lines far from the subtle or the sublime.

Early in the evening she excused herself on the plea of fatigue, and left the men sipping tea and smoking in the study.

"She has not been feeling well of late," said the poet.

"Oh !" The other man looked to see that the communicating door between the bedroom and the study was closed, and went on to say, "You risked public opinion very courageously." And the father of nine

children, two of whom had reached maturity, smiled at the dreamer.

"Mr. Danvitz, I could stand the sneers and foul remarks of the men hostile to me, just as you could stand their attack on you for being responsible by your teaching for what I did." Raman's amusement gave way to indignation that was short-lived in the face of the other's calmness.

Danvitz shrugged his broad shoulders, and spreading out his hands, said in Yiddish:

"What can we do to the dogs? They are furious at our success. To fight them with their own weapons would be a mistake. You are taking the right course."

"I suppose so. Ah, well; what is the difference?" He suppressed a sigh. "As for what I did that brought the hornet's nest about my ears,—it was no caprice. We were serious—almost to the point of not doing it at all. You see?"

"It was partly Bronski's fault," said Danvitz looking at the other man thoughtfully. "A fool who likes toys, nice girls, and so forth. We all do;"—with a ponderous laugh that shook the room—"but we don't show it. I knew him very well at one time. He always had the sex-courage. And that all of us have not. Hindman comes to my mind. He was here, I believe. What brought him?"

"Burovsky."

Katherine could hear the great laugh again, and she wondered what the men had chanced upon that was full of merriment. Impulsively she slipped to the floor from the bed. Curiosity that reckoned neither with excuse nor scruples sent her to the door. The murmur changed to clear tones. Raman was saying:

"He brought me a boiled-down report of the intellectuals' opinion of my doings in that city."

"How does Mrs. Raman take it?"

"It pained her greatly at first; but it is a thing to which one gets accustomed. She has other things to engage her attention just now."

"I hear she is thinking of the stage."

"Dreaming of it, I fear. Her failure is saddening her."

"A pity she isn't as good in Yiddish as English."

"She detests the Yiddish stage. Her dreams are bigger. And I—am silent. She does not know that I do not accept her dramatic ability at her value, Mr. Danvitz. You have never considered me a weakling. Yet here is this woman longing intensely for happiness which must be bought for quite a price, and I say nothing."

"I see. I see."

"I am sure that when she begins touring, and becomes part of the great theatrical world, our relations will begin to look different. Perhaps I have not the necessary magnetism to hold a woman. You must remember that I am a product of our peculiar Jewish life and tendency. She has been caught by the American spirit; and I would burden her."

"It places your relationship in a peculiar light," said Danvitz, softly, touched by the other's candor.

"No doubt! No doubt!" came in accents of grief. "You are the one man to whom I can say that it is driving me mad."

The visitor apparently hesitated to discuss the matter. Katherine, numbed, staggered to her feet, and dropped into the bed with horror-open eyes. When her grief was somewhat mastered, she tossed from side to side unable to seize completely upon the words she had heard. The man, once an easy problem, now frightened her.

"Dreams too big." "Burden her." "Happiness at a great price." The brain repeated this until she writhed.

She hesitated to make a scene, fearful of his honesty which would bring him to repeat what he had said to Danvitz, and apprehensive of a complete threshing out of the question.

Underneath the show of prudence, resentment lay in wait. The woman was perfectly calm before much time had elapsed. But she hungered more than ever for success, and promised not to yield an inch in the struggle. He would see whether she was merely dreaming!

"How can I be afraid of him?" she cried striking her clenched hands together.

It was late when the two men parted, Danvitz deep in the possibilities of a play that the arrangement of circumstances suggested.

"He has changed," he mused. "Yes, very much! Was he a mateable man in the first place? She seems to have nothing in common with him. Of course the thought of a play in English is prompted by the hope that it will mean her opportunity. They are both to be pitied. What he needed was some soft, tender woman, who would have loved him for his own sake, and not for what the world thought of him. He is getting his education at a late period. Perhaps they will come to an understanding—"

In looking ahead for the probable outcome, the playwright confessed himself at a loss because he could not fathom the woman's nature.

"I wonder if she understands herself? She is very strange. Not feminine enough, I would say. She does not like me. I did not agree with her, and she promptly retires."

He shrugged his shoulders.

CHAPTER VI

"ALEXANDER, let me introduce you to a distant aunt of mine, Dr. Rebecca Isfeld," were words that brought back to Raman's memory the day when Hindman had spoken of this relative of Katherine's.

The stern, plump, little woman held out her hand as she studied the man through her thick glasses.

"Mr. Raman may not have heard of me," she said when she was seated; "but the reverse is not true. Of course"—facing him squarely—"I differ completely with you in your social philosophy. Yet I can appreciate a good article, and a good poem."

Raman, at a loss to explain the visit, said politely:

"In your vocation you gather credit as easily as I in mine."

"I doubt it. With your following I would be a rich woman. I see you are trying to have comfortable surroundings."

"Katherine's choice and arrangement," said Raman shortly.

"Would you believe it," laughed the little woman, "she neglected me until a week ago. But of course a friend in need is a good deal of a friend."

Raman looked at the visitor for a moment as if she were a reptile, and then nervously got to his feet to turn up the gas-jet.

"You are still putting your money into your newspaper?" asked the physician.

"I have about stopped. It is coming to a paying basis; and now the readers are helping to keep it white-clean." Embarrassed by Katherine's curious eyes, he said hastily, "Of course you lend all support possible to your own newspaper."

"Oh, yes. Unfortunately, we are not doing as much work as you, if numbers are anything of a measure," said the physician.

Katherine asked hesitatingly of her husband, "Have you put in much money?"

"Something every week for the last two years. But as I said, the people are now rallying to its support."

"You do not tell each other everything, eh?" came from the doctor.

Raman said lamely:

"Katherine is out of sympathy with any radical movement; and I thought there was little need of mentioning a thing which was ceasing to be of importance to me."

"Why did you not make mention of it?" Katherine asked with a touch of resentment in her voice, chafing at the false light in which she had been placed.

"Surely we have sufficient for our needs!" he answered. "Why bother you with details that would be of little interest? You preferred having material things ignored. You see"—turning to the doctor—"we try to keep an ideal level. We haven't talked money much, except playfully."

"Yes, that may be well enough," said Katherine's aunt; "but it gives you a sort of superiority over the woman. You have a hold, which is real, even if it does not loom large."

"I fear," said the poet, "that you are making a problem out of a solution, and a very satisfactory solution at that. What do you say, Katherine?"

A quick glance from her aunt warned her to be silent; and the doctor went on, "Excuse me, but it is a problem, Mr. Raman. Here are you two trying the experiment of building your lives on ideal lines; and yet you deceive one another. Don't take offence. I am assuming what your relations ought to be in theory; and as a theory we may fearlessly examine it, may we not?"

"If you can add any light, I will be thankful," said Raman, so dispassionately that Katherine, who had been studying the man during the last few days, was uneasy.

"I want to ask you," began the doctor inquisitorially, "how far you have really gone towards accepting the idea of the equality of woman? I know you will claim that you are broad-minded enough. But even the most liberal thinkers when they come face to face with facts lose their heads. Your experience during the months you and my niece have been together should have allowed you to draw certain conclusions."

The poet suggested that she turn over the files of his newspaper if she wished to ascertain fully his position, from which, he assured her calmly, he had not deviated a hair's breadth. Otherwise he refused to discuss the matter, much to Katherine's amazement. So this was the seeker after truth!

"I see," said the physician with a smile: "You are indignant because I consider you human."

And then, with little consideration for the attainment of the man, she lectured him, until he felt like a boy that has been soundly spanked, but has not reached the point of complete humiliation.

"It is thus that we individualists rise superior to you," said the woman in conclusion. Having accomplished her purpose, she was ready to depart. "You needed some-

one to point out your deficiencies. I almost guessed it from Katherine's hesitation to speak on many things. Good-bye, Mr. Raman."

He turned away, and with his back towards her, studied a picture on the wall. She glanced almost commandingly at Katherine, and took her way out. Raman resumed his seat, an odd light, almost of laughter, in his eyes.

Katherine was flushed; but so much had she profited by the lecture that her gaze did not falter when she turned to him.

"Your worthy aunt," he began in the blandest of tones, "was highly amusing. You should have prepared me for her visit so that I might have acted meekly enough to have turned the scolding on you."

"You seem very highly amused indeed," the woman said indignantly. "I did not commend your silence. These are times when you seem to fear to enter into any argument, even though the other person may carry off a wrong impression."

"Ah, you say that as if it is likely that she bore off a right one. Dear, our adjustment—if you will allow me to use such a word—is difficult,—really! A little less posing; a little more honesty. You see, *I* am lecturing now. You ought to have my patience." The sad smile disappeared from his face to give place to a frown. "We can raise up obstacles without number, until our path will be a difficult one. You know my shortcomings;—you knew them before your aunt pointed them out to you. Try to treat them mildly; for you ought to remember that my work is self-centering; just as your ambitions often leave you silent. And I cannot measure causes and effects exactly."

"You make it possible for one to see the justice of the

doctor's remarks," she said bitterly; and began to pace the room.

"We see in such cases just as much as we want to see. But we are quarreling, dear. Let us stop where we are. Except that you must allow me to say one thing: I do not want to be humiliated by this woman. If you wish to have her here,—and of course she is your relative,—time it so that I may be out of the way. It is simply a favor. If it seems big to you, remember that a few sacrifices are often necessary."

Katherine was inwardly raging; and the fuel to the flame was the memory of his evening with Danvitz. How she managed to keep her tongue under control was a mystery to her. She found words to say:

"Alexander, you are becoming very small indeed."

"Yes, I have never felt like this before. It may be because I am at a loss how to view this evening's business. Somehow things holy to us have been spread before curious, unsympathetic eyes, and it seems the balance is gone. I will not trouble you much with the fact that I am wretched, that you must be wretched. It is late. Let us hope that by the morning we will be calmer, more rational."

"I can well do without the superior tone," she said with hauteur.

"Would you have me put it meekly? Would it give you a better opinion of me?"

He hurried out of the room to his own, where he walked about panting, his hands twitching nervously, and his forehead damp with cold sweat.

"A little self-control! A little self-control!" he whispered. But the fears and doubts that tore him made it impossible. Why was she ready to precipitate a quarrel of such violence because of a third party's absurdity?

Why ready to condemn and abuse when he had given no cause? And he said aloud:

"I have overlooked much; I have put up with much; I have tried to meet her at all points with affection: How have I fallen short? And everything is full of despair. We can reason and weigh, and yet act like fools. Either I exact too much, or she."

And he wondered whether he really had courage for the realities of life, if this was part of them. Was he inferior to other men? Surely he was losing strength every time he touched the ground.

Unable to make his way out of the jungle of doubt he wearily asked, "Does she love me?"

Katherine in the same moments was harping upon one thing—her apparent loss of liberty.

"He is self-contained, would bend me to his will, has no sympathy, and not a word of encouragement. I must make a good housewife, sing his praises, and be thankful for a little affection."

Why had he failed to controvert the doctor?—he whose boast it was that he could reason out his position and take it bravely.

"What is to be done?" she asked, wringing her hands. "Ought I have gone with him, even if I did love him? Does he regret what he did? That must be it! Fool that I was not to see the bald fact! That must be it! If it is—!"

CHAPTER VII

"SPRING, sure enough, Raman," said the editor of the paper for which he wrote; and looked curiously at the man, who, the moment after he had entered, had fallen into a seat before the window, and was staring out upon the busy street which cut the Yiddish district. The editor, sweeping his hand through his erect hair, went on to say, "Your poems this month are rather heavy,—what few of them you have done."

"Yes?" came absently. Then Raman stood up, and turned to him. "They seem labored, eh? You may be interested in some news I have. Do you know what I got this morning, Marson? You could never guess. A letter from Friedlander asking me to call on him 'in the interest of some important business.'"

The editor leaned back, his eyes wide open with amazement.

"Curious as to what the rascal might be after," the poet went on, "and desirous of telling him a few plain truths, I went. He wanted me to take editorial charge of one of his newspapers. I didn't give him the opportunity to inform me which one. It seemed I might have my choice."

Marson whistled.

"I told him precisely what I thought of the offer and of him. Evidently it was no surprise, for he was unmoved. He said, 'Mr. Raman, I heard you were an ideal man who never lost his temper. I made you a

business proposition. You turn it down. Good day, sir.' He had the hardihood to put out his hand."

The poet returned to his seat.

Marson was taking stock of the changes in the man before him. There had been, for one thing, a loss of delicacy—so the editor termed it—which had given place to solidity,—another of his words. Marson was not displeased with the modification; but he was sadly at a loss to explain the gloom which sat upon the handsome face.

"He thought," returned the editor—and Raman swung his chair about,—"that the monetary opportunity would captivate you. It shows what a world he moves in. The dog! Let me use the facts editorially."

"No. Have another look at it. It would never do, Marson. The best thing is to ignore him. Again, he might flatly deny the whole thing, since his letter does not make clear his purpose. It would be my word against his."

"As you say. Only it would be an opportunity to strike at him with advantage. I suppose you know the new linotype machine goes in to-morrow."

"And the money?" came anxiously.

"It is being subscribed better than we expected. Can you wait a month for what we owe you, Raman?"

"Yes," said the poet unhesitatingly.

"That's good. We got fifty dollars from the shirtmakers' union."

"Excellent!"

And Raman fell to pacing the room, while the editor returned to his work.

"What will she say?" had been the tormenting thought which had hung to the poet through the great throngs, in the newspaper-owner's office, in the street again, and here in the presence of men who loved him for the sacrifices he had made for their cause in the past years.

"She will say nothing, because of the foul way in which she and I were treated," was at odds with, "She will say that when the enemy gave in, I should have enjoyed my victory, and accepted the offer."

Later he cried, "Has it come to the pass where I must hesitate between right and wrong? Then why blame others? If she would only see how I love her! And I thought that I had caught the trick of happiness! Poor fool!"

He found his way out of the office with bare nods for the many who greeted him. Yes, Spring was here; he remembered that she had made mention of the need of some new clothes; and now he had consented to wait a month for money!

The elevated car seemed to whirl madly as he crouched in a seat, blind to the direction of his eyes. The wheels beat, "Unbearable! Unbearable! Unbearable! Unbearable!" until he shifted uneasily, and smiled at the childish weakness.

"Am I fair to her? Am I fair to her?" was the next refrain of the wheels upon the spaces between the rails. The mad medley of his thoughts was hardly equal to an answer.

He climbed wearily out at the station nearest his home. At the foot of the stairs, he started when he saw Katherine alight from a surface car. Her absorption was so complete that she did not notice him until he came to her side.

"We will have a cold dinner," she said. "Shall we go out instead?"

"It matters little to me. But on second thought, better a cold dinner at home."—Although his timidity whispered to him that to give her the news at a café would save him a lengthy exchange of words.

"As you say. I suppose we can find something in the house."

The rooms appeared unusually bright with the spring sunshine. Raman lifted his head and smiled.

"A beautiful day," he said.

"Yes, it is very pleasant."

"The joy of growing things unrolling their buds to the sun reaches strangely up to us."

She spread the cloth, and hunted up a dinner in the pantry.

"I was going to tell you," began Raman as they took their seats, "that Friedlander offered me the editorship of one of his papers."

"Ah!" It was listless. "He is not so bad after all. The money will be of use, I suppose."

"I suppose you know what paper I mean."

"Yes," she said with an interrogating glance.

"We are not in need as it is."

"You mean to say—" she began severely; he finished:

"That I refused the offer? Certainly. You forget that Friedlander put our names in big type on the front page."

"The more reason that you should become of influence on his paper to make it decent," she argued impatiently.

"You seem to know nothing of the newspaper world," he sighed. "He, not I, will dictate the policy of the paper."

"You must have a say. Fried—whatever his name is—knows your views, must have known them before he made the offer. So he realizes with whom he is dealing. He has taken everything into consideration."

"I doubt it;—at least it was doubtful until I saw him. He thought he could buy me. As he put it, it was merely a business proposition. He was to pay me

money; and I was to strikingly phrase his views. It is the beginning of a scheme to bribe man after man on our newspaper, now that it has almost crawled to the top. Of course the idea was an insult to me." The food was bitter in his mouth. "At present I know no master, except my convictions. I write to please myself. Not a line is altered, not a word. There is nothing that I would exchange it for. Certainly not for an enlarged income that might mean a few luxuries."

"Of course you will have your way," said the woman, keeping her attention fixed on her plate.

"What would be *your* way?" he hazarded.

"You must remember that our living expenses are not small. A period of sickness, and we would be worrying."

His spoon fell with a clatter into his plate.

"My dear Katherine, nothing that I can think of would drive me to sell the ambition to be honest to my soul, not even the fear of going back to the machine to make a living for both of us. Have I not left you to choose your way in your art as you pleased, much as it might affect our lives? Leave me, then, to my course. It is hardly a parallel. Yours is a very sudden hostility to what I had long ago thought you had accepted. I do not stand in your way, and have never presented one argument why I should."

"You dwell a great deal on that. Shall I tell you that you looked your relief when I came back empty-handed?" She threw it at him madly, choking nervously as she did so.

"Yes? Perhaps I had at heart our home, our happiness. Did you when you frowned at my application to my work? Listen, Katherine,—we are not children. It must not go on in this unbearable way! It is laughable!

Am I to sit with folded hands while you go off to earn our living?"

"Why grow excited?" she asked with a shrug. "We will learn to make the best of it. Many do so in time."

She broke the silence which followed by asking, "Have you any ready money? I will need the clothes I spoke of, now that it is getting warmer."

"I will have some to-morrow."

He hurriedly left the house after the meal, and walked the streets until nightfall, summing up enough ambition to speak softly to the woman when he returned. Her carelessness drove him back to his work.

Next day as Katherine prepared to go to the library, —which she frequented more because of the sense of retreat among books than out of any desire to do systematic reading,—there was a knock at the door, and she found herself face to face with Robinson.

She gave a little cry of welcome to the hesitating man, and put out her hand quickly.

"Do take a seat. How good of you to have come here! Some tea will be ready soon,"—as he put aside hat and overcoat.—"You bring the atmosphere of the lang syne!"

Her flood of questions did not find him giving a logical explanation for his visit to New York; and he hastened to speak of those in his town who might interest her.

"Did you see Hindman?" she asked. He was embarrassed when he replied:

"No. He was here, wasn't he? I suppose he didn't mention my name."

"No. Aren't you on good terms?"

"Not altogether. It is better so, since I will have

nothing to quarrel about. He isn't a pleasant social animal."

"How did you get our address?" she asked.

"By telephoning Mr. Raman's paper this morning."

Tea was soon before the visitor who was relieved to find that his presence brightened the woman. He tried to accustom himself to the fact that she was Mrs. Raman.

"The old town must be coming to life after the winter," she said.

"Ah, yes. It is very pleasant, too; except that it stirs one uncomfortably. Hindman, no doubt, would explain it as the survival of a primitive instinct: the original, a rejoicing over the prospects of a full meal and a little warmth. You are wonderfully located for New York; —the river, the park. I can see what you make of it."

"Mr. Raman's choice, that he might have quiet."

"He is right," said the man, wondering why she was unwilling to call it her choice also. "The noise in the heart of the town is not idyllic. You do not write to anyone. Mrs. Nast wonders at your neglect of her."

"Ah, the dear soul! I made up my mind several times; but there was always something in the way. I shall write to-morrow!"

The slender form seemed to hang dreamily in the chair, while the man gazed his fill with quivering eyelid. The lines of weariness about her mouth and on her forehead heightened her attractiveness. She was like a tired child that one might caress into soft laughter and a forgetfulness of the world.

Conscious of his scrutiny, she roused herself and said:

"Tell me,—for he and I were good friends, and I am far from being his enemy—how does *he* take it?"

Her eagerness startled a multitude of thoughts within him, as an alarm among a gathering of feathered creatures.

"Why—well, he is worn and bent, and seems little like his old self. He will—just to show you how he looks at it—have nothing to do with Hindman, and is hard upon us all,—for no reason. I leave him alone."

"Yes? He is lonely."

"I suppose he thinks you will accomplish more now, since—since you have gone away. And I suppose it pains him to think that he might have been in the way —a burden. He believed in your ability as an artist."

"Ah, yes; of course. Do not doubt for a moment that I am not his friend. If he came here, I would receive him as such. Although our attachment was unfortunate in every respect, I attach no blame. I can see things very calmly now. But I am his friend, much as he would scorn the word."

"You always were generous," said the man. Then he spoke admiringly of the comfort suggested by the rooms. Katherine took the opportunity to boast of the editorship which Raman had refused.

"His principles above everything," said the visitor without any enthusiasm. He had a decided aversion for the man who had made such an easy conquest of the woman. "Have you tried to secure an engagement?"

"It is useless, my friend. They all seem to think that I can only handle the more serious rôles; and most of the plays this season have been shaped on light lines after all. But it is a mistake: the comedy appeals to me. I may go back to writing. Perhaps I will succeed."

"You want so much," was his warning as he leaned forward with a show of sympathy.

"Ah, my friend, that's what makes life so beautiful. Have we not always said so? Else think of the ennui! One's nature craves work that is satisfying, that is a complete expression of ourselves. It is our restlessness—

the restlessness of the Jew which he angers his Christian neighbor with by expending well in business. We cry, 'Peace! Peace!' but there is no peace. It is in part our curse."

"It is indeed a curse—the desire to try new flights every time the sun rises," said the man thoughtfully. "Who is satisfied? See what a continual jostling! They want to climb, and so quarrel, fight, expect wonders. I am a little out of the way now, though ready to jump in when the opportunity offers. It is the Oriental in us playing with the universe. We like big toys."

"You ought to write," said Katherine, warmed a little by the flow of words.

"Don't speak of it. I would have nothing new to say. After all, why want to cover pages with ink when someone else is doing it better, when skill is combined with brains. It is true that I am hungry for glory now and then, for the soft pat of hand against hand. That's human. But then I want to fight on even terms. I was made to become a dentist; I see it written on the cosmic dust out of which the universe evolved; and a dentist I shall be. A good one; or perhaps not. You don't realize how sensible one feels reasoning in this fashion. No Hindman affair for me. I shall gleefully pull teeth, and fill teeth, and sport a big shingle, and be happy when they say 'Dr. Robinson.' It may be prosaic to you—"

"Hideous! You—!"

"Useful, anyhow." And surrendering his forced mirth, he spoke of his impressions of the great city. Katherine confessed:

"I get frightened a little. What a hilarious fury in everything they do!"

"Yet one feels the current of sanity under it."

"You must be influenced by the nearness of Mr.

Raman's workshop. That's what he believes about the life all around us. I cannot see the sanity. You are simply trying to find a meaning in madness." She glanced at the clock, and said, "Would you care to take a walk? I would like to get to the park for a few hours."

"Gladly. Just the day for it."

When they were outside, she cried, "It is indeed Spring!"

"Surely Mr. Raman has reminded you of the fact a goodly number of times!"

"Ah, my friend, poets do not always go out of their way to put their best in their daily intercourse. I do not even know when he does his best. Such are men of talent. They are affectionate; but that is rather their practical side."

In the park, leaning on his arm, speaking of serious things in a trifling way, and often finding reasons for laughter, she was delighted to call him "my friend;" but took care not to abuse his patience with her worries. The green things about her brought little exclamations of pleasure. She was soon deep in a recital of the events of her early years in New York, when her dreams were like a surging flood, bearing her onward and upward. It helped him to an account of his own youth; from which he turned to remark that he was growing old; and then hastened to belie the words by a show of childish light-heartedness.

All the while he chafed under the burden of one thought: she made no mention of happiness as a result of the step she had taken. Life seemed unstable, and bore an air of useless experiment.

Raman found him reading to her when he reached home, and smilingly extended his hand. He tried to

ignore the shadows which seized upon the woman's face.

Suddenly Katherine, as if desirous of showing him how well she could play a part, grew animated and cheerful, and the room rang with laughter. When the dishes were cleared Robinson sang to them over the tea; and soon was discussing art with the hostess. It brought the poet back to his first sight of Katherine in Philadelphia.

He saw the whole woman now. From that hour she ceased to be a mystery; and the events of the last months explained themselves in full.

He realized also that he had stepped into a new world.

CHAPTER VIII

RETURNING home one morning at an earlier hour from his journey down town than was his wont, Raman found Katherine hastily drying her eyes. He stopped before her, and she was frightened when she looked up at the angry man who was regarding her with bitterness.

"There is no reason why you should carry on like this," he said harshly. "It may be that I am doing you an injustice. But there is but one thing that you could tell me. I don't know whether you are conscious that it has worn your life, chilled mine, and made us almost strangers. I think I have a perfect right to speak of it. I want to take the opportunity before it is too late. I am hoping it is not too late."

"Why bring up the subject at all?" she asked coldly. "I believe you know my mind. At least I never made a pretence of concealing it."

"I suppose you long ago decided that you would not be tempted by the prospect of making a home—a real home, where you might surround yourself with friends—"

"I am not the wife of a little merchant. You forget my ambition," was her answer, flung at him almost with defiance.

He could have laughed in her face.

"Were I to find opportunities for eating out my heart, I would shirk the responsibility; although I do not know that I have shirked it."

"That may be very funny, Alexander," said the woman, trembling. "Certain things have become rather amusing and trivial to you of late. At the beginning—"

"At the beginning I said nothing that I take another view of now."

"Of course: you doubted my worth from the very beginning. You did not want me as a comrade, but as a woman who would truckle to your every whim. You doubted me. Could you not have taken the intensity of my ambition into consideration, and not have waited all this time to tell me that I was useless. O my God!" She wrung her hands. "And then to deride me before others!—"

"Before others?"

"It may be that Danvitz is dearer to you than I—"

So the door was not closed that evening! He crimsoned as if caught in the very act of making the confession to his friend.

"What you heard was an honest statement, a statement that my silence up to then made clear enough. You ought to know that I asked you to come to me because I loved you. I did not stop to consider your ambitions. It would have been very absurd. And you have been playing a farce until it is almost tragedy. I never knew I had so much patience. Almost as much as you, Katherine."

"I suppose you feel warmly towards me," she said with a sneer.

"The simple truth is that I love you. Do you dislike the word? You seem to forget what you and I have gone through because of it. It seems a mockery now, no doubt. It is only when strangers come that you make an effort to appear cheerful."

"You mean," she cried, "that it is to please them?

Perhaps you are going to throw the visit of Mr. Robinson up to me. Why not have someone watch me?"

"How dare you accuse me of meaning what I would never have dreamt of thinking!" He brought his fist down heavily on the table.

She suddenly threw her head back, and said very quietly:

"It is all getting to be pretty bad isn't it?"

They looked at each other for a moment; and their silence was more eloquent than all their words.

Taking his hat, Raman went out.

For some time Katherine lay back in a chair, and then went to the window, fascinated by the water sparkling in the sunlight. Gruesome things suggested themselves to the overwrought mind. She played on the possibilities; shut her eyes to see a multitude of pictures; went as far as to have Raman pacing the room wildly; and even heard his, "Why did I drive her to it?"—and was startled by the striking of the clock.

She stood up with a sigh, and hunted among the books for something that would be in keeping with the grimness of the hour. At last she went to his room.

On its threshold she paused to cry, "It is here that he lives! Nowhere else! Nowhere else!"

She remembered where he had placed the letters of the infatuated girl who had driven him to Philadelphia; and she set to work to turn over his papers, but found nothing except a photograph of herself.

Among the unfinished work under her eye there were but few lines of verse. Standing, she read a page of an article he had been preparing. It was fitful, lacked strength, and would leap into paragraphs of violent language almost without reason. His work was unquestionably deteriorating.

"His attitude towards me is worrying him," she decided.

He returned to find her preparing supper with a quietness of demeanor and lack of ill-humor that surprised him.

She met him in the same way during succeeding weeks; but their words were brief. The man lost the hold upon his work, and struggled for clearness of thought against a blurring of meaning that wasted the pages for him. In desperation he cut down the number of columns he contributed to the paper.

He took up the play which he had outlined after his conversation with Danvitz. To his amazement it proved an absorbing task.

Those who visited the couple did not come to the rooms again, and rumors were rife in New York about the unpleasant relations of the poet and the woman whom he had taken to himself. Soon the rooms were deserted during many hours of the day. Antagonism and weariness brought matters to the breaking point.

Late one afternoon he came home in brighter mood than was habitual with him; but as one hour after another dragged by without any sign of Katherine, he grew sober and troubled, and was soon busy with conjectures. The darkening of the rooms as the day waned found him lying on a couch muttering to himself. He was pale, and his pulse beat feverishly as he tried to prove that her step was a wise one.

"Oh, what a hideous thing two beings can make of this world!" he moaned. "I love her! I love her!"

He lashed himself without mercy in his effort to do justice to the woman, until he desisted because reason refused to countenance the tearing to shreds of his normal life to cover a theory.

He thought of telephoning to Dr. Isfeld, but a sudden inspiration sent him to the clothes closet. It required but a glance to ascertain the truth. A suit-case was missing, and some of Katherine's belongings.

Despite the months of wearing differences, his love for the woman had not lessened; and when he fell asleep, it was only a truce with body-racking moments. He awoke to bewilderment and anguish.

Tremblingly he awaited the first delivery of mail, certain that she would write in defence of her conduct.

He was not mistaken. The letter was there.

She had been brief.

"I have left you; because I believe there was no other thing to do, so much having poisoned our lives. It was getting unbearable: you with your heart and soul mainly for your work, and your doubts for mine. It was not the sort of comradeship that makes life pleasant.

"My experience has been a little costly. I think I can bear with what the world will say without feeling that it is punishment. I have no use for the word.

"Dr. Isfeld has loaned me money with which to leave the city. Be fair to her. She is a noble woman, who approves of my conduct, although it was not she who saw the necessity of it, since she could not have known all.

"Do not for a moment imagine that you are the wronged one. Despite your supposed breadth of view, I was only to be a source of amusement: to supply a smile for your weary hours, an encouraging word for your depressed ones, and, of course, a worshipping attitude for your working ones. Examine your conduct, and you will find it to have been thus.

"I have tried to treat this in unprejudiced fashion. But when one realizes how big my ambitions are, and how little your faith, it makes even friendship impossible.

"We must go our own ways again. For you it will

be no hardship. There will be many who will sing your praises, and have a good word for you. Let me tell you that as a writer you will never succeed until you will be able to enter heart and soul into another's position. Your sympathies to-day are really a protest against what gives you pain.

"I have been moderate and even-tempered. You know I have! Can you deal as well by me?"

"What relief she must have felt at leaving me to have penned so calm a letter!" he reflected. "But it was madness. Unstable, fickle character! Having tried the trick once, she tries it again. It was not brave. She refuses to stop and think."

He reread the words, and pronounced them flippant.

"She is delighted to be able to make the situation a sort of battlefield of temperaments. Child's play!"

It was a few days before he could recover self-possession enough to face those he knew. He easily explained his pallor:

"I have not felt well. New York does not seem to agree with me. We are seriously thinking of going to Boston for the next few months."

No one doubted the words. They were relieved to learn that he would often come up to the city; and some even commended the step he was taking.

With great quietness he disposed of the furniture, and made ready to depart. Rudov, the last man he met, told him:

"You have aged five years in the last two months. You take married life too seriously."

"I never was more satisfied than I am now," came with a laugh.

PART III

WORSHIPPERS

CHAPTER I

DR. ISFELD, willing to aid in the removal of the "yoke," had supplied Katherine with funds sufficient for several months. And the young woman had been busy with correspondence whose object it was to bring her talent to the attention of the manager of a stock company in Philadelphia. The organization yearly presented a series of farces during the summer months to fun-loving, artificially-cooled audiences.

She almost collapsed with delight when a letter arrived informing her of the likelihood of an opening in the company.

"It must be that the press comments on my first appearance in Philadelphia won my case for me," she decided. "God in heaven, is it possible that at last I have made a beginning! I do not care how small it is!"

Her aunt excused the tears of happiness which the ambitious woman shed.

"You now have your complete independence," she told her. "It is better to earn one's living, than to have it earned for one. No hanger-on to a man! You have made more mistakes than many women of your years. We will see whether you will profit by them. I would detest you if I dreamt that you regretted having taken this step."

"No! No! I do not! Believe me!" And Katherine smiled exultantly through her tears. "It would hurt him if he got to know that I have made a start.

But I can bide my time. Of course the salary will be trifling. It makes no difference, however. I will get along on it. The future shines clear now. The experience in farce work is what I needed; and the notices will prove that I am capable of something else than heavy parts."

The other woman, who seemed entirely at home among the specimens of dissected and aborted life, was loath to disturb her dreams.

"You must taste of the sweetness of a free existence," she impressed upon Katherine; and was considerate enough to withhold her sneering view of the status of the American stage.

Katherine, in the last hours, wearied by what she called the "unbridled materialism" of her aunt, rode the length of the city to the Battery, choosing a car line far removed from the route of Raman's travel. She sought a bench, and watched the incoming and outgoing steamers, the ferryboats, the broad, yellow, rippling beam running out to the sun, and the light-bathed statue of the goddess.

Philadelphia the next day! Fear and joy mingled in the thought. There was danger of laughter, sneers, abuse. She would isolate herself! It must prove hard; but had not that been the condition of affairs during the last months?

She gritted her teeth with hatred of the man. No, he would make no noise. It was a blow to his pride. He must have thrown himself into his work with fury to forget her. Ah, she had been too kind in the letter she had sent him! too kind! If the world but knew what manner of man he was!

She asked herself how it was possible that she had been carried away by his pretty phrases and his pose.

Yes, life was hideous when thoroughly understood.

There it was masking itself in the great city behind her. But were these humanitarians better? They, too, liked their ease and their flesh-pots; although ready with a sigh for the world's wretchedness.

She was quickly won from her angry mood, and gazed out upon the sunlit expanse of water with hope-touched eyes. After all, she had youth and strength! Why not look upon the past as a complete mistake, and put it by in accepting the new opportunity which life granted? If she was to save anything out of the wreck, let it be the lesson of martyrdom. Her aunt was justified in the statement that to be free one must beware of half-way measures that sapped one's strength.

When she was on her way to the place which she had meaninglessly termed "home" for a week, her dreams were of appreciative audiences, and flattering press notices, the latter to pave the way for success in the following winter. How she would work!

She hardly closed her eyes in sleep that night; and studied her pale, eager face in the mirror with pity next morning.

"Yes, I have suffered," she mused. "It would be absurd if I was not grateful for the fact."

She listened to her aunt's lecture with a proper air of humility, though painfully bored, and was chary of words of gratitude for the aid rendered her.

Dr. Isfeld was left a little thoughtful when her niece departed.

"I do not know her," she confessed. "Still, she has been very unfortunate."

On her way to the train Katherine was worried by the fear that Raman might be hanging about the railway stations. But she was soon laughing at the preposterous notion.

"He could have gone to Dr. Isfeld's office," she reasoned. "It is curious how I am trembling. I ought to have slept well last night. What if I were on the verge of a physical breakdown? It is nonsense. I am simply excited."

She found a rear seat in the last of the railway coaches, and kept down the blind until the train pulled out.

The flying landscape revived memories of her ride to New York with Raman. She smiled at their shyness which had made conversation impersonal; and then frowned at the imbecility that had furnished them ideal pictures of the future. In analyzing the joy of those hours she found it convenient to speak of her release from a "soul-destroying carelessness." But her mood soon proved kinder to Bronski.

"Robinson was right when he accidentally pointed out that this man at least believed in my future; he gave his heart and soul to my dreams, and asked nothing, accepting my failures in the noblest light. He believed in me."

She bemoaned the fact that she had not written to Mrs. Nast when she considered, "In thus beginning all over again, to whom can I turn? Who would not fling the door in my face?"

But she drew a deep breath, and fought the first wave of discouragement with the thought: "I can put them all aside. No toadying. My needs will be few, and I will be brave."

A train passing in the opposite direction with thundering speed, furnished her with an analogy for her relations to Raman.

"Gone out of my life! He will be doing his work a little better perhaps. But he can never succeed in a big way. It was wise to point that out in my letter to him, since he will remember that, when he forgets everything

else. He can find some fool to be his inspiration. No, I will never make a mistake like that again!"

She was rebellious against the pang of jealousy which shot through her at the thought of another woman taking her place in Raman's existence.

"The day of my success will arouse him to the wrong he has done me. My name will be dinned in his ears; and men will learn to know him. I can patiently bear the few years between myself and recognition."

Green fields hinted that summer days would render her work exacting.

"I ought to have gotten more sleep last night," she repeated with a laugh.

Her heart throbbed when Philadelphia came into view, and she was restless in her seat until the depot appeared. Then she put back her shoulders, smiled a little, and alighting, slowly took her way to the newsstand for a paper. In her search for a room, she hit upon one far to the north of the city, and out of reach of the Jewish quarter.

"It will mean loneliness; but books will help, and the parks, and my work. I mustn't think of it!"

The end of her ride on a street car brought her into the heart of the textile district. Clattering looms suddenly paused as the dinner whistle sounded, and lines of stooped, pale men and women trailed out of the mills to their meals. Their appearance almost decided her against the neighborhood; but her impatience to be at the theatre hurried her to a conclusion.

The little grim Englishwoman who showed her the room evinced so great uneasiness when Katherine proudly made known her profession that it amused the seeker after histrionic honors. With the proffer of a month's rent, the woman's scruples vanished. Katherine said:

"Ah, my friend, there is a big world outside our prejudices."

The other nervously fingered the money, and was silent.

Leaving her suit case, Katherine hurried away from the depressing atmosphere of cheap prints, rag carpet, and stiff-backed chairs.

"I certainly never viewed the stage in the light of orthodox morality! Of course there must be many people like that. A godly woman who is certain I am damned; and her hell has a devil with a long tail, and a pitchfork, and a lake of molten sulphur. How queer! And those mill-workers! They looked ready to tumble into the grave. Why should one want to waste sympathy over them when they don't care for themselves? A hideous neighborhood, but enough out of the way to satisfy me. Later we shall see about something better. What if I run against somebody I know? Ah, well, I will have to meet them sooner or later."

Her mind flew on in this fashion as she took her way to the theatre, and she resorted to varied tricks of the imagination for courage to face the manager.

After the interview with him she was a little numbed. The small, grey eyes that had swept her body had not helped her in her confusion, and the bored air with which her nervous flow of words had been met robbed her completely of her dignity.

She was not roused when the manager fixed her salary, for there was no definite promise that she would be used every week. A list of the plays to be offered that summer interested her somewhat. Then came a curt nod; and she sought the street with unsteady gait.

She went back to her room, and slept soundly the rest of the afternoon.

CHAPTER II

REHEARSALS proved unsatisfactory to the ambitious woman whose meagre lines did not require subtilty of interpretation, or very close study; and finding that she was making no headway in interesting the manager, she ceased to give much attention to her work.

It was easy to hold aloof from the members of the company whom she considered beneath her. They, on their side, found her a tiresome talker, and were impatient with her statuesque poses.

She ceased to write Dr. Isfeld when a letter from that quarter spoke at some length of the unanimity with which the individualists had supported her action. It meant a bruiting abroad of what Katherine would fain have kept suppressed for some time; although the spirit with which she had left New York had encouraged her aunt to take the step.

When the news reached Raman's friends that Katherine had broken with him, they were vehement in their denial, unable to credit the fact. But their letters found him silent.

Bitter at the way he had played into the hands of the enemy, Marson and the other heads of the newspaper to which the poet contributed, hesitated to take up the gage of battle. Eventually Marson volunteered to see Friedlander, the owner of the opposition press, whom he informed that if his papers went beyond the bounds of

decency in discussing the matter, it would be made known to the world that the position of editor had been offered the poet.

Friedlander laughed at the threat; but his account of the affair was sufficiently toned down to satisfy Raman's friends.

The poet himself was careful not to allow a Yiddish paper to cross the distance between New York and Boston. But it was not long before a letter from him reached Hindman. It said in part:

"You know what has happened. Can you tell me whether Katherine is in Philadelphia? I want to know what has become of her . . . . I will ask you to withhold this from others."

Hindman tempered his quality of justice with mercy, and wrote:

"She has entered upon the sad work of being funny at a theatre here which presents farces for the summer. There is neither glory nor money in it. I cannot see what she is after in this case but the money. More I do not know."

Further word did not come from Boston; and Hindman was irritated at the poet's refusal to explain, bemoan, or rage. He gained some satisfaction by attending a performance in which Katherine had some two dozen lines as her part. Later he learned that she was a frequent visitor at Mrs. Nast's house.

She had not found her isolation bearable; and her hunger for someone in whom she might confide drove her in a rain-storm to her old friend.

Katherine said, "I come to you after a month's loneliness to prove your former love for me."

The tears ran down the little woman's cheek, and she clung to the two hands she had seized. Then as Kath-

erine burst into sobs, Mrs. Nast put her arms about her, and spoke soothing words.

"O my friend," cried the young woman, "you alone understand what I have gone through!"

"I know! I know! I can read your heart like a book. You did right in coming to me. To think that this quiet man would prove unsympathetic and a tyrant!" Mrs. Nast sighed, and suddenly cried, "Ah, you will see how glad the doctor will be to find you here! We spoke of you every day. I shall tell everyone that you have been here. I am proud of you! Ah! Ah! How strange the world is! Only music is certain."

She exploited the opportunity at the piano.

"You are very good," breathed Katherine when she had finished. "How absurd of me to have stayed away so long! Yours is a heart of gold."

"Yes, you should have trusted me. How pale you are!"

"I have not been myself for months. And the last days I have not been able to think at all. It seemed that the whole world was up in arms against me. I was afraid, miserably afraid."

"Well, well, human nature *is* deceptive. Although you have not done anything that was unusual, you must remember that we are living among people without ideals, who get enthusiastic only when they have something to eat."

She continued in the same strain; and never had language sounded more exalted to the ears of the sighing woman. The few hours she spent in the house that evening compensated for the weeks of heartache.

Miserable with the summer heat, Katherine soon found the rehearsals unbearable; and her discomfort was not lessened by the manager's exaction that she clownishly exaggerate her parts.

More and more it became a question of what she would do at the end of summer. She was frightened by the thought of going to her aunt for assistance, and began to put aside a few dollars a week; only to relinquish the effort when she hastily cast up the sum which might thus be spared. To Mrs. Nast she made no mention of the despair in her outlook.

On her way to the car from rehearsal one morning she chanced upon Robinson who paused, although he immediately regretted the action. Her composure helped him to commonplaces, and he was soon so much at ease, that he asked her to have dinner with him.

"If you will let me pay my share," she said quietly.

"Oh, I am comparatively well to do. One might almost call it prosperous—for me. An undergraduate gets lots of dental work from friends, you know."

"And you have always had many," she said.

"Trust me to know it."

She followed him into a café, although his lordly air was not at all to her liking. When he finished giving the order, he turned to her with the words:

"I saw you in last week's play. They handle the farce excellently,—so excellently that I was lost in the story even when you came out. It was certainly side-splitting. I positively believe I was a different man when I went away."

"Yes? It must always be a pleasure to those who see the finished work. We get our laugh, and then we forget."

He looked at her almost severely, and got out with more courage than she expected:

"Do we?"

"Suppose, then, you tell me what my former friends are saying about my leaving New York. I am sure you remember everything they tell you."

"What can you expect them to say? Blame them for wishing the world went a little more quietly!"

"Ah, my friend, if we cannot live our lives to our own satisfaction, why wish to live at all? We are not here to bolster up a theory. It is true that we make mistakes. And we repeat them. And it is true that to undo the second mistake is often harder than the first. But it is the only way to ascend to a nobler view of one's self. That is something."

She felt that her plea was forced, and found her words at random as she proceeded. In a short time she was halted by the thought, "Why argue at all, since he does not wish to understand?"

"What does it matter?" asked the man with a suggestion of a sneer: "You are happy."

"True!" she said, nodding brightly, although she was furious. "You do not reason like the mob, that hideous mob which sees only what is on the surface, and knows not that there is a heart and soul to every human being. I am glad that you frown down the idea that a woman should be a man's toy. No, I am not a silly hero-worshipper who forgets self to the degrading point."

"Of course you know what you are doing," he said.

"Do not doubt it for a moment. I reasoned out my position thoroughly, although the world will never allow that a woman can do so. It never meets the woman half way anyhow, since it is man's and brutal. I will admit that Mr. Raman was as liberal as the best; and yet he was to stand up, and I was to fawn. In fact, so little respect had he for my ambitions that he thought I was trifling. Do you understand how that can shrivel up the soul, and freeze the heart, and bring revolt? Do they occasionally have pity for the under-dog? Why, then, should they resent if that under-dog shakes itself

free? At worst it would mean a happier ordering of the world."

The man did not take his eyes from his plate.

"We are sometimes too hasty about what we do. Second thought is important," he said. It required all his courage.

"We can never be too hasty when much is at stake. Anything else does not count. It ought to appeal to you: it smacks of the quick arm, and the blow."

"I believe you know me better than that," said the man unsteadily.

"I am afraid we are not at all acquainted. But why should we argue? My side has been better presented than ever I could do it. And I believe you have been sympathetic to the attitude,—in theory."

He tried to suppress his resentment at this show of strength.

At parting she thrust the price of her dinner upon him, and left him quickly without noticing his extended hand. He was a little pale.

"One of the vile frauds!" the woman said. "A beast who has absolutely no memory. They are all alike. It displeased the moral man. I hope he is satisfied now."

So he had been to see the play! How many of the intellectuals of the Jewish community who were taken by storm when she first appeared in the drama, were now attending the theatre to be able to make comparisons and discuss her! Was it a descent? It brought the perspiration to her brow.

The question did not leave her when she journeyed to the park that afternoon. What benefit was she deriving from her work? Was it not really food for laughter? The meagre lines, and the scoldings of the manager when she was confident that she was doing better than any

member of the company, was certainly discouraging. Had she not chosen the most impossible way to success?

She managed to drive away for the time being the irritating thoughts and turned to the book which she had brought with her. The pages did not prove absorbing, and she gave herself to lazy dreaming in a mood which often took on the trifling spirit. It was not strange that she should bend careless eyes upon much that she had considered serious. To her impersonal queries the world loomed vague and confusing, making her one of many, and waving back her extended hand.

In the car on her return home she found herself between begrimed Italian laborers who clung to their dinner pails with a stolid air, and exchanged but few words. She could not understand why separate cars were not provided for working-people; at least for working-people like these.

A letter from Mrs. Nast was handed to her by the Englishwoman. It made mention of an intended visit to one Mrs. Salenkov on the following Sunday. The reason given was that the lady was much interested in Katherine. Mrs. Nast was insistent that her friend be on hand.

"That's a distant relative of Bronski's," flashed across Katherine's mind. "They were never very warm towards each other, and may not be on good terms now. Else, why should she want me? She may wish to defy him. It will amount to that. Anyhow, I will have gained another friend, and I must win them over one by one,—those that may be of some use to me."

She prepared for the evening's performance with a feeling akin to disgust. Then she paced the room, wringing her hands, and crying:

"I must not look at it in that way! Ah, what a coward I have become! Death is preferable!"

CHAPTER III

MRS. NAST, on her way home from a trip to the music store, came upon David Bronski shuffling along with bent head.

At the sight of her he stopped, and his troubled eyes took her in sternly.

"I want to speak to you," he said with an abruptness which startled the good woman.

"Come to my house. I am always at home," she said, gathering herself together.

"No, now will do—very well. Let me go down the street with you. I can spare the time."

She walked on obediently, curious to learn what he had to say. He began:

"Katherine has been coming to your house, I hear."

"Certainly. Isn't my house good enough?"

"It is not that, of course," he stammered. "You should not accept her visits. I protest. She has—has outlawed herself. You see—so shameful—this Raman business—how it ended. Ah! Ah! Shameful!" He heaved a great sigh. "I knew it would be just so. I knew it—a trifling person who has no honor."

"Mr. Bronski, excuse me—you never understood your wife," said the little woman.

"No, I didn't; or I would never have made such an awful blunder—such a fool of myself. They all laughed; they laugh now. It makes an impression even on the dullest. We don't live twice, and to be humiliated—hu-

miliated as I have been is beyond my strength. It has made me disgusted with myself ;—almost more than with her. There is nothing in her conduct that one can find reason for or excuse. She is restless, morbid ; and in a woman it is bad. I doubt that she is sane. Nevertheless, it has humiliated me."

"Mr. Bronski, she is an exceptional woman, who made mistakes ; but we all make them, except some more beautifully—"

"Beautifully!" cried Bronski, staring down at her.

"Of course. Don't you think people are noble who want something else than four walls and food? I said you did not understand her. And, necessarily, you cannot be fair to her : you are not broad enough. Why interest yourself in her at all? Why think of her? Why stop one of her friends and make such a fuss?"

David Bronski was so much moved that he was forced to pause in his walk.

"I don't think of her except in connection with my shame. And I am not interested in her. Simply common decency asks that a woman doing such a thing be punished. You understand? You have no right to accept her in your house—no right to be intimate. You understand?"

"My affair," came with an exasperating shrug. "My affair. She shall not lose the only friend she has in the world because you have a spite against her. No, sir!"

"Ah, you see! The only friend, since everyone is disgusted with her. How low she has fallen!"

"David Bronski, leave the woman alone, just as she leaves you alone. You hear? She is not concerned with you. A great, terrible abyss divides you. You have no right to even look across it. And, sir, you have no right to hunt her down like this. She shall meet

everyone who comes to my house; and if she is not good enough, they need not come. You want my opinion of you: you are a fool!"

"You have no right, you have no right," murmured the man, suddenly helpless.

But the outraged lady had swept away with her head high in the air, although she had discovered a grain of pity for the man who had several times been on the verge of an unmanlike whimper.

She reached home in a flutter, and paused at the foot of the stairs to call to Dr. Nast. Hurriedly finishing with the patient under his care, he joined his wife in the parlor, and stood at attention.

She related her conversation with Bronski, adorning it, and dilating on the pathos of the forlorn husband trying to conceal his love for the woman; while the little man stroked his mustache with the necessary gravity.

"Ah, he also has not many friends; he was heart-broken. Although I scolded him, my heart was full of tears. It is too sad. My dear, I have made up my mind."

"Yes?"

"Watch what is going to happen. She is not happy, and seems to have little hope for the future. He is not happy, and is a wreck. The future no longer concerns him; else what did that excitement of his mean? And the wet eyes? I understood it all! There was nothing he had to tell me, although I was for the moment indignant. And now, perhaps—"

Her silence was profoundly significant.

"I would not try to do anything, dear," he said gently. "You are too courageous, too courageous. You assume terrible burdens. And in the end you may gain nothing."

"Well, well, we cannot be too courageous when happiness is at stake. Ah, she is so lonely, so sad, so broken! Not my Katherine of old. As if she had gone through a machine. And to think that many believe she has not been sufficiently punished! Her soul is too pure for sin."

She allowed him to return to his patients while she remained seated, and solemnly reviewed the situation.

Suddenly she got to her feet with wonderful agility, and going to the foot of the stairs, called, "Dr. Nast, Dr. Nast, I have found a way!" And before the head of the house could recover sufficiently from his astonishment to descend, the outside door closed behind his wife.

With eager feet that found the ground irksome, she sped perspiring down the street, passing several acquaintances without being conscious of their greeting, and at last paused before a house which displayed an attorney's sign. She was all dignity when she pulled the bell.

A tall, slim woman received her with a kiss, and led the way into the parlor where partly-closed shutters helped to keep out the heat.

"I have come to you," began Mrs. Nast, wiping her moist face, and adjusting her glasses, "when I could come to no one else. It dawned upon me that you were a distant relative of Mr. Bronski's;—not that I forgot it; but I remembered it distinctly in connection with something very vital to the existence of several people, Mrs. Salenkov."

Having made an end of the introduction, she began with a recital of Katherine's woes; then passed over to Bronski's loneliness and dejection; and finished by broaching a plan which had suggested itself to her fertile mind. She was pained when the other woman failed to hail it with joy.

For some time there was silence while Mrs. Salenkov tossed about for means of dissuading her friend. Her lack of ingenuity forced her to say:

"Don't you think Mr. Bronski would be very angry to find her here, dear? Even if it should seem accidental, he is certain to see through it at last. And if you failed, it would only make trouble."

"He will not see it! Not at all! I will go over it again to prove to you that it is reasonable. Since he visits you often, there is little danger of his thinking your invitation strange when it is for Sunday night. Of course you must be careful, very careful. Just mention it accidentally, with great carelessness; and you can find something you want at the drug store. Goodness me, it is not suspicious! And then your motive should make it a pleasant duty. Either they will quarrel, or will go away, or will become friends again. Think what it will mean! You and I hold the happiness of two people in our hands."

"If anyone else came with such a suggestion, I would not listen to it," was the compliment Mrs. Salenkov paid Mrs. Nast. "But I find a good deal of reason in what you say. It is true that he is broken-hearted, and lonely. But he believes she has dragged his name through the mud, and cannot forgive her. Of course he is human."

"Does he speak often of her?" Mrs. Nast asked eagerly.

"Her name is rarely out of his mouth."

"Ah, you see! You do not know human nature; and you have read all those Balzac books in the bookcase! He is angry just because he wants her to come to him; and of course she does not know it; and he does not know it exactly either. Think of his conversation with me. What do you discover in it? That he hungers for

her, that he loves her, and would forgive her if he only saw how much she has changed in her suffering. You will be like an angel in doing this thing."

"But she—?"

"She *I* will take care of. I will write to her to come to see me Sunday."

"You will tell her nothing?"

"Nothing except that you want to see her."

"But she knows that I am a relative."

It almost stunned Mrs. Nast. She looked blankly at the other woman. But in a moment she was herself again, her wits busily at work.

"She never came here with Bronski, did she?"

"No. He was very cool towards me until this thing happened, and I was the only one to whom he could turn."

"Excellent! Excellent!" cried Mrs. Nast. "You are not on good terms with him. You understand?"

Mrs. Salenkov slowly seized the idea. It did not altogether please her.

"But you see that I run the risk of losing her as a friend," said the little woman, "and yet I am ready to make the needed sacrifice. She would not consent to such a thing. She is earning her livelihood, and is thinking of writing;—that might satisfy her. But only love satisfies, Mrs. Salenkov, only love. And she hates Raman, oh, so much! He has trifled with her. I am certain that her feelings towards Mr. Bronski are of the best. I divine it. Her soul is so simple, so open! How can people think her bad? She is like a child that you take in your arms and caress. Ah, me! It is a sad world! Have you anything cool to drink?"

When she was alone, Mrs. Nast was tempted to go to the piano; but instead folded her arms, and dreamt of her task of restoring the happiness of two people.

CHAPTER IV

BRONSKI almost rose from his seat when Katherine entered Mrs. Salenkov's parlor behind Mrs. Nast. That he had been made the victim of a carefully planned trick had no time to surmount the scattering of his wits; for there stood the woman, pale, with staring eyes, and her greeting dead upon her lips.

He fell back in his chair, his head whirling, and his tongue paralyzed.

The lady of the house had gotten rid of her husband for the evening, and sent the children to bed; but at this moment she would have wished the room full of people. She managed, however, to express sufficiently her surprise and delight at the unexpected visit, inquired after the health of the two women, and then left the field to Mrs. Nast.

To that lady's joy, Bronski stayed where he was. He cleared his throat, almost choked, coughed, and then sat up in his seat like a statue.

It was not Mrs. Nast's intention to leave him in peace. She first asked after his well-being, had a staccato "That's good!" for his murmured answer, and then talked the weather to tatters. The hostile tension did not dash her courage. She had a mission, and to put herself at the mercy of death-dealing silence would be the beginning of the rout.

Books were her next venture; and for half an hour she lectured, taking Balzac for her theme, until Mrs.

Salenkov was induced to throw in a few words. But Mrs. Nast was not long in recognizing that there was danger in books. So she was forced to play her last card.

She went to the piano, and filled the room with the potent grief of a Chopin Prelude. She felt that she had never played like that before. At last she was speaking in a language of which she was certain, and she put her whole heart into the effort.

Bronski, in a state of collapse, was revived a little by the music. He told himself several times that he would go, but seemed to be rooted in his chair as if a hypnotist had passed compelling fingers over him. Soon the elusive dreams of the melody warmed him, melted his pity, created a strange world in which there was no hate; and he could even have wept, so greatly was he shaken. To add to his demoralization, the nearness of Katherine fired his veins, and soon the recurring idea was that she had been his. Yes, she had been his! Listening to the Chopin music he began to pity her. After all, had she not suffered? How pale she was! and worn! He was frightened when he was suddenly struck by the thought that she was a perfect stranger to him now, and trembled as he stared at a mirror in which her face was reflected.

The heat of the evening made tea impossible; so the hostess had provided lemonade. Bronski's shaking hand forced him to put his glass aside,—an incident which did not escape Katherine. After the first flash of anger when she had caught sight of Bronski, she found no resentment. Her power of resistance was at an ebb; and as she observed that the man's glance, in his study of the mirror, was kind, and his brow smooth, she sighed. He had believed in her. He was not a man concentrated

in self. Ah, what a mistake she had made! How could she blame him for hating her? Had she not almost ruined his life? And he had lived but for her!

The hostess inquired about her work at the theatre. It allowed her to speak at some length of the educational value of the parts which she had been assigned. But she did not dwell as enthusiastically on the future as might have been expected; and it was this that set Bronski to thinking. He was dimly conscious of a note of sadness in the woman's show of confidence, so accustomed was he to every shade of feeling in her voice. Again and again he forgot himself, and looked squarely at her while he munched his cake.

The three women carried on the talk among themselves, although Mrs. Nast often turned to Bronski for confirmation of some statement that she seemed not to be certain of, despite her usual assurance. His nod of the head would suffice, and she would rattle on again. And thus several hours stole away, with all growing more and more at ease.

Katherine asked Mrs. Nast to sing. The little woman pointed out that the evening was too far advanced, but yielded to the coaxing. She made choice of a little melody of Tchaikowsky lacking in the upper notes of which she was so fond, so that the effect was almost recitative. She wondered if they realized that she was sacrificing her art for the sake of the words. When she had finished, the room was quiet.

Katherine rose to take her leave. Mrs. Nast said:

"My dear, you cannot wish to go so great a distance at this hour. Stay over at my house."

"I must get home to-night. There are some lines I want to go carefully over in the morning, and I must make sure of them."

"But so far—!"

"If you will allow me," Bronski stammered in a strained voice, "I will see you home."

The women started, Katherine almost violently. Her impulse was to refuse point-blank. She managed to get out, "Thank you, but it would take you too far out of your way, Mr. Bronski."

The "Mr. Bronski" almost undid the whole of Mrs. Nast's work. But the man recovered himself, and said:

"Not at all! Not at all! I think—I think you should not go to your room alone."

"If you care to take the trouble," murmured the woman whose limbs almost gave way under her.

All left the house, and Mrs. Salenkov parted with her visitors on the doorstep. But when Katherine and Mr. Bronski were out of sight, Mrs. Nast rushed back, and dragging her co-intrigante into the house, embraced her with the words, "There! There! I am almost fainting with happiness. Let me sit down and rest for a minute. I feel as if I had been through some soul-torturing ordeal. I hope I shall not faint."

The man and the woman whom he was to take to her home silently waited for a car, as silently entered it, and found seats without a word. She did not demur when he paid her fare.

After they had travelled some distance, the exit of passengers left them alone in a corner. Bronski said:

"Katherine, I am lonely. Would you come back and make a home with me again? I want you."

Her protest revealed lack of self-possession:

"What! After all that?"

"Yes. We all make mistakes, and in this case we have both suffered. The past shall be past. I will for-

get it—have forgotten it. What have you to lose? A home awaits you. I stored away the furniture. I had no heart to sell it."

Her pride asserted itself.

"No! No! It will hardly do. And again,"—with dramatic emphasis— "it would be too sad to repeat the mistake we have made. Despite what my enemies have said, I never considered my step harmful—to anyone. They have vilified me, jeered, mocked; but I feel stronger and more decided than ever. It was almost a necessary step in my life. Forget the past? Why, it is a fact!"

He was indifferent to her outburst.

"As I tell you, I am lonely; and that past cannot be helped;—and I do not care about it. Take your time in giving me the answer. There is no hurry; that is, I do not wish to hurry you. Of course we will not care what people will say;"—put as if he had intended, "*I* do not care what people will say"—"I do not wish your final decision now. Think it over."

She was silent, which left him satisfied. At her door her words were:

"No, I cannot give you an answer now. You must wait, and expect anything."

His "Good night, Katherine" touched her with its suggestion of heartache.

In her room she paused after taking off her hat, and was crimson with a sudden rush of shame. Then she clenched her hands, and cried:

"How could she have led me into this! To think that I could trust her so little! And she was not more a fool than I. She lied to me about that woman. I ought to have seen through it. An answer! I was an idiot not to give it to him at once! No! No! Oh, no!

I will not say, 'Take me back!' What a return it would be! More laughter! To think that I should have lost all control of myself! Must I make a farce of all that has happened up to now? Rather to seek employment in some store when the season is over!"

With reflection came strangely the unreality of the evening. It seemed part of a dream.

Then she sobbed, first softly, afterwards with a storm of tears that eased the tension. But instead of finding her mind made up when she sought her bed, she soon saw that she was at the mercy of a vacillating spirit which denied her all peace.

She stared into the darkness for several hours, until sleep, without rest, intervened. She tossed from side to side, the slender limbs twisting the coverlet; and her drawn face was almost covered by the unloosened coils of hair.

Once she awoke in the night. After crying a little, she fell asleep again.

In the morning rain was falling, the grey mist making the quiet street dull and repulsive. Never had the woman felt so careless of the to-morrow. Her work that day at rehearsal was so devoid of interest that the stage-manager spoke sharply to her.

The evening found her gathering herself together for the performance. She fought temptation with shut teeth and glaring eyes, until determination won; and she thrilled with the effort. Before an hour had passed, her spirits were at low ebb again.

Near the house in which she stayed an incident occurred on her return from the theatre that helped to sap her courage. She was accosted by a man unsteady with drink who spoke numbing words until she found strength enough to strike him in the face. The nervous, desperate

blow sent him down like a log. Then she ran panting to the house, and managed to open the door against which she leaned to recover herself. When she crawled into bed, it was to cower there with chattering teeth until sleep came.

The rain continued to fall all that night and next morning, and Katherine opened her eyes only to close them again, unable to struggle with a shadow that paralyzed life. Soul-weary, she was almost anxious that some mastering illness put an end to her miserable existence. It would be sweet to lie quietly until death intervened.

"How useless everything is! How useless!" she moaned. "I am so eager to give it all up, and be done with it."

She thought of Bronski, and he seemed to stand before her, lonely, bowed with care, broken-hearted. Had she not been childish in the doing of that sudden deed? What a hideous impulse it had been! No, she could not blame the world for wishing that things went more quietly. Robinson, though a fool, was echoing the speech of reasonable people.

It looked now as if she would never be able to bridge the gulf between herself and the many who at one time had been proud of her friendship. They would not forget the past. She arrived at the point where she admitted that she had no right to complain of the punishment.

Rest! Ah, how much it was worth! Not to know care! Not to be constantly stretched on a rack! What counted the feverishness when it made for war and broke the heart? To rest and let the world glide by. If she were but certain of the love of any one person!

She drowsed until the thought of her work drove her to her feet.

"No, there is no use struggling!" she cried. "I will write to him. Why should I continue to torment myself?"

Hurriedly dressing, she seized pen and paper, and set to work at once that the opportunity might not pass. She wrote with hysterical speed. The striking of the hour—which proved to be nine—aroused her to her surroundings. Fortunately, she had no lines until the last act. So she continued, whispering her words as she set them down.

At last the task was accomplished; but she lacked courage to read the pages she had filled. Her head fell to the table, and she moaned as if in physical agony. The house of cards was down; her fingers were too weak to begin over again.

She got to her feet with an effort, only to fall back into the seat; and gazed stupidly at the letter for some time.

When she laid her hand on the mail-box, she stood still a moment. But her struggle did not last. Inquisitive eyes forced her to dispose quickly of her morning's work.

Then she walked away with rapid step.

CHAPTER V

RAMAN, who had returned to New York in the fall to stage his Yiddish play under the direction of Danvitz, was astonished on the eve of the performance to find a letter from Hindman on his table.

He waited a few moments before opening the envelope. The doctor would not have taken the trouble to write unless he had news that could be rendered stingingly effective. And the poet's anxiety was increased when he noted the length of the letter. The reason for Hindman's lavish use of penned words was soon made clear.

"Having next to nothing to do—the busy season, so to speak, being due somewhat later,—how better to kill time than by bringing to your notice certain incidents that have interested me? Coming to you on the day of your great success they should be received in the right spirit. Your play is sure to be a success. You are enough of a man with a past now to do some exceptional work.

"Yes, you are lucky. The world goes well with you. And it goes comparatively quieter, too, I suppose. You might even tell you were happy, if you cared to be sincere. But you have, no doubt, learnt to dissimulate, as you have learnt many other things more valuable.

"I believe I tried in roundabout fashion to warn you. You saw nothing, having your own convenience in view. It is only real virtue that carries a lantern and examines carefully.

"Well, to begin showing you what an ordinary world we live in, suppose I tell you that the former Mrs. Bron-

ski, alias Mrs. Raman, has returned to her first and only love. I do not refer to the stage. It is Mr. David Bronski who is the honored individual—"

The poet gave a great cry, and the letter slipped from his hands as they fell limply to his sides.

It was an hour before he attempted to follow the words which covered the pages.

"Her career on the stage was short. I have no doubt it will survive her desertion of it, her new husband—rehabilitated—to the contrary notwithstanding, as they say in proper English. The joke was so unexpected that the community has not seen it in the right light yet. What they will say will be worth listening to. The average man has a sense of humor; and anyhow the Collective Humor is always keener than that of the individual.

"Let us be charitable: it was want of money that must have driven her to it. That was most convenient; certainly more convenient than any other method of getting a living. We, who interpret man's doings in terms of how he secures his bread and butter, can excuse her. You tried love; but that did not seem to succeed.

"You might have hung the walls of all your rooms with her photographs. Your failure to do so was inexcusable. Do you catch my idea? Underneath large portraits of Katherine Bronski, small photos of Dusé and Bernhardt. That, and the poems dedicated to her genius, would have kept her at your side.

"But no man likes his shortcomings pointed out, especially after the way your mistakes have counted up.

"Returning to Bronski, he must be happy to have enticed the bird back into its cage, even though some of the prettiest feathers are gone. Love that is touched with pity is very strong: if not lasting in young men, it is certainly the failing of old ones.

"Do you know who brought about the reconciliation?

Our friend of the 'Grand Passion'! None other. How she did it is beyond me. She had two unknown quantities to deal with. Perhaps she possesses more brains than we would allow her.

"As for Mrs. Bronski, I have seen her. She lacks much of the old vivacity. To eyes that know her she seems tamed; but there is a dogged look there if one gets close enough to see it. Perhaps she is not as much pleased as we would expect her to be. She has been accustomed, you must not forget, to shouting and lording it. Any other rôle does not become her.

"They have rooms over the drug store, and she is satisfied sometimes to come down and dust bottles,—with the same affection she must have lavished on your books.

"Bronski, of course, receives me, and tolerates me. They have next to no friends, and even I can be a substitute for one. When I come across Mrs. B., she looks at me rather absently and without the slightest interest. I happened to be within speaking distance of her the other day; Bronski was preparing some medicines for me. I told her about your Yiddish play. Apparently she does not read your paper now, for it was news to her. Of course I had the audacity to speak of the honor it meant for you to have your play open the season. Her glare almost froze my blood. Had she had the advantage of an animal, she would have cried out with rage. You might say I ought not have done it; but I was eager for the experiment; and it showed me that she hates you. There is no other word for it.

"Bronski crawls around half sick most of the time. Her leaving him must have been a bad blow. But when she is near, he straightens up his shoulders. Old people pose more than young ones; although he is not very old, and might easily outlive us. I pity him when I put myself in his place. It is no easy matter to be fighting old age for the sake of a young woman, and keeping her from getting the horrors. I am not very confident about my own future.

"As I said, she hardly speaks a word to anyone, and all return the compliment. To be sure she has Mrs. Nast who has stuck by her through thick and thin, as they say in the novels. I somehow feel that she is not as bad as she really appears. Katherine's friendship for her I never could explain. It shows that there is something missing in her make-up.

"I would have wished for the courage in the woman that would have driven her to something desperate. It would have been perfectly in harmony with her former pose. Anyhow, it might have served her as an advertisement to attract some theatre-manager. Not a bad idea when I come to think of it. But occasionally fortune misses a fool.

"And you also were a fool,—if I may be plain with you. A freak thing to do, and a freak way of trying to make the best of the worst. I will say though, that I was not disappointed in you; I had really counted on your doing the exceptional. But I could stand two surprises.

"After all, a man of your flimsy experience with women was sure to put his foot in it with one like Katherine. Next time you will have to find a worshipping being who will have but one duty in life: to stroke the chance frowns out of your brow. It is not worth while being a Tristan except on a high salary, and with the prospect of a hearty dinner after the performance.

"Strange how the conservative press refused to take advantage of you! Will you please explain the puzzle to me? When you first aroused their moral wrath, they called you 'libertine,' which was a little beyond the mark. 'Experimenter in the Licentious' was a better attempt to do you justice, although surprising from that source. But I could not excuse their cowardice which stopped at names.

"Quite a lot of poetry you are turning out. And it is better than the stuff you gave us in the past. You seem to have gotten better lungs for blowing upon the divine fire.

"To show you how nothing escapes me, Katherine saw the letter carrier hand over some letters to her husband, and looked at him expectantly. Of course there was nothing for her. Who would write? Can she believe that you might? You would find cutting your throat a more profitable business. I suppose you agree with me in that.

"I accidentally learned from Mrs. Nast—to whose talk I always listen with great pleasure—that Mrs. Bronski is perfecting herself in English that she may give a literature to the world. I believe she has tried it before. If she succeeds,—and her hysterical experiences and opinions may appeal to a big audience—I would be sorry for you. When time teaches one to hate—! What if she does succeed? . . . .

"As for me, I will confess that I don't get the enjoyment out of things of this sort that I used to. Everything is beginning to fret me. I am too impatient to even get along well with myself. It isn't a pleasure to become old and tired before one's time. But I suppose I will have to keep on with the game. I ought to get away, say to some town in the west; but it is a question whether I can adapt myself to new environments. Strange what a man will dream; but I have thought what satisfaction I would find in travelling about, and seeing places like southern Asia, and staying there. To forget this machine-made world! Do you understand? But I suppose I will have to remain and laugh at people; an occupation which has employed many in the past, although I do not know that a vast concourse followed them to their last resting-place. I feel too lazy mentally to even say, 'What's the difference?' . . . .

"A lot of nonsense; more for my own amusement than yours. . . ."

Raman read the last part of the letter absently. The past days had swept down upon him with the mad roar of an infuriated mob; and in his helplessness he discovered that the coming success would hardly serve as

refuge. He was trying to allow that there was no reason why he should not have expected the step Katherine had taken; but he seemed to have been tricked into presenting a feeble front to life.

He thought long of the woman; until with a breath of pain he broke from the stupor which had seized upon him.

Finally he pulled open a drawer, and drew out a photograph of her. He studied it for some time with lacklustre eyes; then and with a cry of, "So she has gone to him!" tore it up, and flung it into the waste-basket. Hindman's letter speedily followed it.

"It was long, long ago, was it not?" he smiled through his tears. "Just a memory—an accident. And what followed could not have been otherwise. No! No! It could not have been otherwise! That alone is my consolation."

He began to dress for the evening, running over the words with which he would thank the audience, since it was certain that the play would be received with favor. The rehearsals had pleased the best minds of the community.

He finished dressing; and as his eyes left the mirror, they wandered to the waste-basket, and a frown settled on his face.

"Ah, the destruction of the likeness will hardly wipe out the memory of her, and of those hours. She hates me? It is his imagination! Why did he send me the letter so that it would reach me to-day? Hate! He does not understand her. Unless she hates herself!"

He heard someone inquiring for him. It proved to be Danvitz. The famous playwright shook hands warmly as he cried:

"You seem quite stirred up with the thought of your

first night. Strange to say, it will be the same when your next bid for public favor gets its hearing. As for to-night, I promise you plenty of applause. Take it as a matter of course."

"You promise to lead in the cheering?" laughed the poet, turning away abruptly.

Danvitz had seen tears in his eyes, and at once found a jest to create laughter.

As they were going out, Raman stopped for a moment to say to the woman from whom he rented his room:

"Mrs. Ginsburg, would you mind emptying out the papers from my waste-basket?"

That lady, despite her sixty years, occupied her evening pleasantly in putting together the bits of the photograph.

THE END

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